

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES OF BEGINNING HOME ECONOMICS
TEACHERS IN MALAWI: A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature.....

Date.....

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an interpretive analysis of the professional experiences of six beginning Home Economics teachers in Malawi. The specific aim of the study was to explore the opportunities, challenges and problems of the teachers in their first year of teaching. The data for the study were developed using a triangulation of five research methods, including a questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, classroom observations, teachers' reflective diaries and focus group discussions. Grounded theory was used as the methodology and analytical framework of the study.

Research in teacher education acknowledges that learning to teach is a complex process (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Flores, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006; Solmon, Worthy & Carter, 1993) and that the first year of teaching has a very important impact on the future careers of beginning teachers (Stokking, Leender, De Jong and Van Tarwijk, 2003; Solmon *et al.*, 1993). The transition from the teacher training institution to the secondary school classroom is characterised by a type of reality shock in which the ideals that were formed during teacher training are replaced by the reality of school life (Lortie, 1975). The results in this study point at the school context as the 'reality definer' in the professional experiences of the teachers. The findings also support previous studies of beginning teachers which have emphasised the vulnerability of beginning teachers and show the first year of teaching as a 'sink or swim experience'. However, the results show a unique relationship between the school context and school expectations. In this dissertation I contend that it is this relationship that was fundamental to the professional experiences of the six beginning Home Economics teachers.

In the dissertation I present a three-stage substantive-level theory of the beginning teachers' experiences and argue for the redefinition of the perception of teacher learning in Malawi: from a definition of pre-service teacher education as teacher learning, to teacher learning as a 'triadic process' comprised of teacher education, school induction and continued professional development.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie verhandeling is 'n verklarende analise van die professionele ondervinding van ses beginner- huishoudkunde-onderwysers in Malawi. Die spesifieke doel van die studie was om die geleenthede, uitdagings en probleme van die onderwysers in hulle eerste jaar van onderwys te ondersoek. 'n Triangulasie van vyf navorsingsmetodes is gebruik om die data vir die studie te ontwikkel, naamlik 'n vraelys, persoonlike onderhoude, waarneming in klaskamers, die onderwysers se nabetrachtingsdagboeke en fokusgroepgesprekke. Gefundeerde teorie is as die metodologie en analitiese raamwerk van die studie gebruik.

Navorsing oor onderwysersopleiding erken dat om te leer om onderwys te gee 'n ingewikkelde proses is (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Flores, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006; Solmon, Worthy & Carter, 1993) en dat die eerste jaar van onderwys 'n baie belangrike impak het op die toekomstige loopbane van beginneronderwysers (Stokking, Leender, De Jong and Van Tarwijk, 2003; Solmon *et al.*, 1993). Die oorgang van die onderwysersopleidinginstansie na die hoërskoolklaskamer word gekenmerk deur 'n soort werklikheidskok waarin die ideale wat tydens opleiding gevorm is, vervang word deur die werklikheid van die skoollewe (Lortie, 1975). Die resultate van hierdie studie dui op die skoolomgewing as die werklikheidsbepaler in die professionele ondervinding van die onderwysers. Die bevindinge ondersteun ook vorige studies wat die kwesbaarheid van beginneronderwysers beklemtoon het en wys die eerste jaar van onderwys uit as een van 'buig of bars'. Die resultate wys egter 'n unieke verband tussen die skoolomgewing en skoolverwagtinge. In hierdie verhandeling voer ek aan dat hierdie verband die grondslag gevorm het vir die professionele ondervinding van die ses beginner- huishoudkunde-onderwysers.

In die verhandeling bied ek 'n selfstandige teorie in drie fases van die beginneronderwysers se ondervinding. Ek bepleit ook die herdefiniëring van die persepsie van onderwysersopleiding in Malawi: van 'n definisie van voordiensopleiding, na een van onderwysersopleiding as 'n drieledige proses van opleiding, skoolinduksie en voortdurende professionele ontwikkeling.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to all the teachers in Malawi: May the challenges in the profession inspire you with creativity for the enhancement of improved classroom and professional practice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Researchers in teacher education acknowledge that learning to teach is a complex process (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Flores, 2001; Solmon, Worthy, & Carter, 1993) and that the first year of teaching has a very important impact on the future careers of beginning teachers (Stokking, Leender, De Jong, & Van Tarwijk, 2003; Solmon *et al.*, 1993). The transition from the teacher training institution to the secondary school classroom is characterised by a type of reality shock in which the ideals that were formed during teacher training are replaced by the reality of school life (Lortie, 1975). This dissertation is an exploration of these experiences based on perspectives of beginner teachers in Malawi.

In the dissertation I explore the professional experiences of six beginning Home Economics teachers. The study is an interpretive investigation of the professional socialisation of new teachers within the Malawi secondary school context. The research draws on the everyday school and classroom experiences of the beginning teachers to interpret, derive meaning from, and develop a pattern for understanding the core processes that informed their day-to-day teaching practices.

This chapter provides a background to the issues that are explored in the dissertation, and is presented in five sections. Firstly, I provide an overview of some of the topical issues that have dominated the beginning teacher research literature over the years; secondly, I provide a brief background to Malawi, the country on which the study is based. In the third section I define what Home Economics is – since the study draws from experiences of Home Economics teachers; in the fourth section I present the significance of the study. Finally, in the fifth section, I provide an overview of how the dissertation is organised and presented.

1.2 Beginning teaching: an overview

In the literature the research focusing on the first year of teaching has been grounded in a number of perspectives and has used different theoretical frameworks. Three of the dominating frameworks from which beginning teaching has been analysed have been a focus on the socialisation of teachers, developmental stages of teachers and analysis of cognitive development processes in teaching. Early studies in teaching primarily examined teaching from a unidirectional perspective (Lawson, 1989). Since the early nineties, studies have adopted an interactive approach, where teachers are viewed as active participants in their socialisation (Solmon *et al.*, 1993; Sudzina & Knowes, 1993).

Another perspective that has stimulated important debate in the study of teachers' work is research methodologies. In the literature both qualitative and quantitative designs have been used. Research of this kind has highlighted a number of problematic aspects of instruction (teaching) common to first-year teachers which have been documented, such as managing student behaviour, dealing with time overload and planning developmentally appropriate lessons (Olson & Osborne, 1991; Rust, 1994). However, in recent years there has emerged an increase in the use of qualitative interpretive designs (Connole, 1993). Since the turn of the twenty-first century social science research has increasingly developed an understanding of human nature and ways through which it can be brought under scientific scrutiny. The natural sciences (positivistic approaches) are no longer viewed as the only appropriate foundation for understanding human behaviour (Connole, 1993). Because qualitative interpretive research designs have enabled researchers to enter the world of the participants under study and to derive meanings from social phenomena from the perspectives of the participants, their use in social science research has continued to increase. The qualities of qualitative research and the interpretive paradigm were found to be most ideal for the present study which was specifically interested in exploring beginning teachers' experiences.

Although literature on beginning teaching abounds, not much has been documented on beginning teaching in Malawi. Teacher education in Malawi has often been informed by studies from non-African contexts, most of which are developed nations in Europe and North America. Yet most of the research has indicated significant cultural and contextual influences in teaching and learning (Rosenholtz, 1991; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Watkins & Biggs, 1996).

In Europe and the United States of America (USA), where most of the literature originates, teacher education researchers have called for greater exploration of the interface between educational theory and the realities of teaching (Wideen & Grimmer, 1995). Unfortunately, in the African context such concerted efforts to evolve systems of teacher education that are culturally sensitive and relevant to local needs are not evident (Akyeampong, 2002). In explaining this Akyeampong (2002:12) states:

Partly this could be due to the paucity of teacher education research that reflects African concerns to produce insights for changing the way in which teachers have traditionally viewed their professional roles and responsibilities in the classroom.

This study is a step towards addressing this concern. As a teacher educator myself, my aim is to explore the professional experiences of beginning secondary school Home Economics teachers in Malawi, a developing country in the south-eastern part of sub-Saharan Africa.

Consequently, I feel that the results in this study could provide valuable feedback for teacher education in Malawi in the training of Home Economics teachers, especially because the results are based on contextual and cultural experiences from within Malawi. In addition, I presume that, through their involvement in this study, the six beginning Home Economics teachers who were the participants had an opportunity to reflect on their initial teaching experiences and start to

draw some meaningful insights from them.

1.3 Context of the study

Malawi is a country in the south-eastern part of Africa, with a projected population of about 12 million in 2004 (based on the 1998 census count of 9.8 million). The country is divided into three administrative regions (northern, central and southern regions) with a total of 28 administrative districts (NSO, 2001). According to a 2005 World Bank report, Malawi has a literacy rate of 62.7 percent, with male literacy at 76.1 and female at 49.8 percent (World Bank, 2005). Malawi's economy is largely based on agriculture, which accounts for more than 90% of its export earnings, and contributes 45% of gross domestic product, which supports 90% of the population. Almost 70% of agricultural produce comes from smallholder farmers. With such a narrow economic base and with no mineral resources, poverty is significant and widespread in Malawi. Poverty is prevalent in both rural and urban areas. World Bank estimates indicate that 60 percent of the smallholder population in Malawi lives below the poverty line (MOE/UNESCO, 2004). According to the 2004 Human Development report, Malawi is ranked at 165 in the Human Development Index (HDI) and is listed among the least developed countries of the world (UNDP, 2004).

The education structure in Malawi has three tiers. The first tier consists of the primary school system, which covers eight years. The second tier is a four-year secondary school system. Tertiary education is the third tier and it consists of the university, technical and vocational education and teacher training. The Ministry of Education controls primary school teacher training in Malawi, while secondary school teacher education is primarily under the auspices of the University of Malawi, although since 1995 it has also been supplemented by an upgrading diploma course presented by the Ministry of Education, at the Domasi College of Education (DCE). DCE graduates about 250 Diploma teachers every year, but these still have to come to the University of Malawi to upgrade to degree level. In 2002 the Mzuzu University was created with the primary aim of

increasing secondary school teacher training in the country.

The Bachelor of Education Degree (BEd) programme offered at the University of Malawi, Chancellor College is a four-year degree course, which provides courses in the relevant secondary school subjects (such as Biology, English, Geography, History, Home Economics, Mathematics), and courses in Curriculum and Teaching Studies (Teaching Methodology) and Educational foundation courses. The four-year course is followed by a twelve-week teaching practice period. During this time the student teachers are placed in various schools to teach and their college lecturers pay them supervision visits. After this period the Ministry of Education employs the new teachers and posts them into various secondary schools throughout the country. This study is based on a follow-up of the 2005 Bachelor of Education degree graduates who had Home Economics as their teaching subjects and were in their first year of teaching.

1.4 What is Home Economics?

Home Economics as an area of study and a profession originates from the United States, and its history dates from the late 1800s. According to East (1980), the subject was first conceived as a multidisciplinary area to deal with four main issues: population explosion, environmental degradation, social inequality and economics (household management). During this time Home Economics was defined as:

....the study of laws, conditions and principles and ideas concerned with man's immediate physical environment and his nature as a social being, and especially the relationship between those two factors (AHEA, 1902, cited in East 1980:10).

Over the years the focus of Home Economics has constantly changed as a result

of changing perspectives in the subject. Various models/perspectives of Home Economics have emerged and each has had varying areas of focus. According to East (1980:7-40), the four dominating perspectives which have guided trends and activities in the subject over the years have been: Management of the household; Application of science for improving environment; Human Ecology; Inductive reasoning; and Education of women for womanhood (*Homemaker*). The nature of Home Economics courses therefore varies, depending on the dominant model being used in the curriculum. Because of the competing models that have existed, names of the subject have also changed time and again and varied from place to place. For example, Home Economics courses have been labelled under different names such as Human Ecology, Human Development, Home and Family Life, Consumer Services, Technical and Industrial Education, Applied Sciences, Business and Resource Management, Domestic Science, Home Craft, Home Economics, Cookery, Home Management.

In Africa Home Economics was introduced by missionaries as domestic science or home science in the early 20th century. Home Economics diverged from its perspective on ecology and became centred on aesthetic and functional relationships, primarily in the context of western middle-class households. There was an emphasis on household technologies and on traditional values related to home, motherhood and the ideology that these were women's primary vocation (Eckman, 1994). Home Economics developed a reputation as a 'stitch and stir' subject. It was this model that was transferred from Western countries to developing nations in the post-independence period as part of development assistance efforts, which was also reflected in the curriculum, text books and teaching resources, designed to teach girls and women European lifestyles, values, norms and standards of life (Eghan, 1990). Although much of the school curriculum content has changed in many countries, the subject still often has a low status in the curriculum; it is perceived as only a domestic science and is gender stereotyped.

In Malawi Home Economics is perceived as a multidisciplinary and integrated

subject whose main aim is to promote family wellbeing. As such, Home Economics adopts an ecological perspective in dealing with problems through the use of practical problem-solving approaches. Secondary school Home Economics in Malawi includes concepts in areas of Food and Nutrition, Food Security, Family Studies, Textiles and Design, Human Development, and Housing and Environmental Management issues. In a secondary school curriculum review in 1994 Home Economics also became one of the carrier subjects for population education messages (MIE, 1998; MIE, 2001). The subject is therefore diversified and multidisciplinary in content. Issues of malnutrition, food security and population are critical areas of concern in Malawi for individual and family wellbeing, as well as for national development. Home Economics is therefore an important subject in Malawi's school curriculum, because it deals with practical perennial problems facing the everyday needs of Malawian families.

As a teacher educator teaching courses in Home Economics education, I was always driven to developing a clearer understanding of Home Economics teaching. Questions about how beginning teachers experience the teaching of such a multidimensional subject have dominated my work over the years. In conducting this study I was inspired by this experience to explore ways that would advance an understanding of beginning teacher experiences as a means of bringing insights into my own practice and for improving teaching in the subject. Specifically the main research question that informs this study is:

- *How do beginning secondary school Home Economics teachers in Malawi conceptualise and experience beginning teaching?*

In pursuing this question, my aim was to find out the following:

- How do beginning Home Economics teachers in Malawi experience the demands of their profession?
- What are the opportunities, challenges and problems experienced in teaching Home Economics by beginning teachers?

1.5 Significance of the study

Education is fundamental to the development of any country. In Malawi shortage of teachers is one of the main problems affecting the promotion of quality education. In 2000 there were only 2, 500 secondary school teachers, and amongst these some were either unqualified or under-qualified (MOE, 2000). Furthermore, the 2000-2012 Policy Investment Framework (PIF) of the Ministry of education reported a teacher attrition rate of 10%, which was alarming. In order to address the problem of teacher shortage the Ministry of Education planned to work with partners, donors and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) so as to ensure an adequate supply of 'an academically and professionally qualified secondary school teaching force' (MOE, 2000:30). However, at present, the University of Malawi is still the main source for secondary school teacher education.

Since the inception of a Bachelor of Education course in the University of Malawi, at Chancellor College in 1975, no study had been conducted on the skills or experiences of beginning secondary school teachers in Malawi. There is also limited research documentation on the teaching of Home Economics as a school subject in Malawi. The results of this study are therefore important, as they provide a first review into the experiences of beginning secondary school Home Economics teachers in the country.

Furthermore, this study provides feedback to me, the researcher, in my role as a teacher and teacher educator. Similarly, the voices of the beginning teachers in this study are likely to provide valuable feedback to many other people involved in pre-service teacher training, and thereby contribute to knowledge development for effective teacher training practices in Malawi as well as other developing countries.

1.6 Dissertation style, presentation and chapter outline

This dissertation is an exploration of the professional experiences of beginning Home Economics teachers in Malawi. The professional experiences of the teachers in the study are described and interpreted as documented from field research with six teachers.

The thesis is presented in seven chapters. In Chapter 1 I provide a background and frame the context of the study. Chapter 2 is a review of the literature. I draw on comparable studies from various countries to provide a sketch, as well as a backdrop to, the issues in beginning teacher literature. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology. In this chapter I provide explanations to how the choice of theoretical perspectives used in this study and other methodological decisions were arrived at. Chapter 4 presents the data that were developed. In Chapter 5 I present the detailed data analysis and interpretation. Samples (extracts) of actual data from the participants are used to illustrate categories and themes in this chapter. In Chapter 6 I present the substantive-level theory developed from this study and in Chapter 7, I draw my conclusions. In this final chapter I also reflect on the study process and make some suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Research on beginning teachers has been conducted within a variety of theoretical perspectives. It has also used diverse research methods and has had differing points of focus (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Flores, 2001). Regardless of the differences in approaches, the literature on beginning teaching has emphasised the richness and complexity of the phenomenon (Flores, 2001; Solmon *et al.*, 1993). The shift from student to beginning teacher has often been known to constitute an interplay of complex interactions among different, and sometimes conflicting views, beliefs and practices (Bullough, Young & Draper, 2004; Flores & Day, 2006).

This literature review aims at exploring what has been documented on the perspectives in beginning teaching and the initial professional development issues in order to establish what is known about the professional world of beginning teachers and their lived experiences, challenges and problems. The literature review therefore focuses on four main areas of the teacher research literature: teacher socialisation, perspectives on teacher induction, perspectives and trends in teacher research, and teacher professional growth and development.

2.2 Professional socialisation of teachers

Socialisation is a process that happens to people as they move through a series of structured experiences and internalise the subculture of the group (Lortie, 1975). Conditions of entry play an important part in socialising the members into a given occupation (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Lortie, 1975). However, the influence of socialisation varies from one occupation to the other depending on

how rigorously or intensely the induction process is conducted (Lortie, 1975). In a review of research on teacher socialisation, Zeichner & Gore (1990) categorised socialisation into teaching as occurring in three stages, consisting of two pre-training experiences and one post-training experience.

2.2.1 Stages in teacher socialisation

The first and second stages of teacher socialisation occur prior to the formal teacher training phases. The first stage of the socialisation is the teachers' own personal socio-historical past, beliefs and values, which have been found to play a large part in shaping their classroom behaviour and practices (Calderhead, 1993; Knowles, 1992; Wideen, Mayer-Smith & Moon, 1998). For example, Harley, Barasa, Gertram, Mattson & Pillay, (2000), studying the way that South African teachers implemented education policy, noted that teachers assumed roles in their practice that, apart from the influence of local cultures and contexts, reflected their personal value systems. These values and past experiences were also often the lenses through which the teachers made sense of their everyday classroom practice.

The second stage of socialisation occurs during the teachers' student days in various classrooms (both in primary and secondary school, and at university), which Lortie (1975) calls "the apprenticeship of observation". This research suggests that beginning teachers' classroom practices are more than a function of the content of teacher education programmes. The studies show that teachers' classroom practices have their roots in teachers' own experiences of schooling, particularly in their previous interaction with their own teachers, resulting in certain perceptions, values and expectations of teaching (Flores, 2001; Knowles, 1992; Stokking *et al.*, 2003). Commenting on this, Lortie (1975:65) observed that:

Teaching is unusual in that those who decide to enter it have had exceptional opportunity to observe members of the occupation at work; unlike most

occupations today, the activities of teachers are not shielded from youngsters.

Studies that have focused on this stage of teaching show that, because of past school experiences, teachers-to-be often underestimate the difficulties involved in teaching (Lortie, 1975). Barnes (1989:13) observed that:

After watching teachers for years as pupils in elementary and secondary schools and, subsequently as students in college, they (novice teachers) think they know what they need in order to teach.

Similarly, Rust (1994) noted about this that beginning teachers held “front stage” behaviours of teaching that are obvious to anyone who has been in school, but were unaware of the real complexities behind the profession. These observations raise serious concerns on the quality of the pre-service training that beginning teachers receive (Olson & Osborne, 1991), and challenges teacher education processes to explore ways that can replace the simplistic notions about teaching and learning with more grounded understanding of subject matter, learners, context and learning, so as to properly inform beginning teachers’ judgements and actions (Barnes, 1989).

The third stage of teacher socialisation occurs in the induction year of teaching. The induction year of teaching is the first year in a teacher’s career. This stage in the socialisation process is about beginning teachers’ entry into their teaching career. It is concerned with professional experiences of beginning teachers, which is the focus of this study.

2.3 *Perspectives on the induction year of teachers*

Three dominant areas of research in the induction year of teachers have been a focus on studies that analyse problems in beginning teaching, studies that

analyse developmental stages in the early years of teaching, and more recently, studies that analyse forms of induction and support programmes that are offered to beginning teachers. This section highlights some of the important findings from these research areas.

2.3.1 Problems and challenges

The induction year of teaching is recognised as an important segment of a teacher's career, believed to have long-term implications for teaching effectiveness, job satisfaction and career length (Feinma-Nemser, 1983; Lortie, 1975; MacDonald, 1980; Mokgatle & Acker, 2002; Schlechty & Vance, 1983). Unfortunately, research in teacher education also indicates that the first year of teaching is linked to several problems and challenges for teachers. A significant body of research indicates that beginning teachers are generally not prepared for the workload encountered in the school, nor for the complexities of the interpersonal relationships they are to experience (Wideen *et al.*, 1998). At the classroom level beginning teachers are reported often struggling with classroom management, with meeting the individual needs of students, and with the management of curriculum and resources (Moss, Fearnley-Sander & Moor, 2002, cited in White & Moss 2003).

Over the past twenty years a vast body of research knowledge has been developed on the problems that beginning teachers experience upon entry into schools (e.g. McDonald & Elias, 1983; Veenman, 1984). The transition from college student to school teacher has often been described as abrupt (Lortie, 1975) and a 'swim or sink' experience (Farrell, 2003). Professional socialisation into teaching has also been viewed as a turning point in teachers' perceptions of themselves as they start to see the real demands of the job from within. Beginning teachers are reported to find that the job makes more demands on their time and energies than they had expected (Lortie, 1975) resulting in "practice shocks" (Stokking *et al.*, 2003).

“Practice shocks” experienced in the first year of teaching have been attributed to the increase in dropout rate in the first year of teaching (Stokking *et al.*, 2003), which seems to be a universal problem. For instance, in the United States of America (USA), longitudinal data indicate that 15% of all teachers leave the profession after their first year and another 15% after the second year (Odell & Ferraro, 1992). Teacher attrition appears to be an international problem with reports ranging from 5% to 30% (MacDonald, 1999). In England and Wales it was reported that between 5% and 8% of teachers leave the profession prematurely (Smithers, 1990), and as many as 25% of qualified graduates of teacher education programmes in the Czech Republic choose not to enter the profession (OECD, 1996). High levels of teacher attrition derail national efforts to improve the quality of education, which is one of the major challenges in the education systems of most developing nations.

The socialisation into a new school setting has also been portrayed as a demanding and powerful process which often results in the beginning teachers changing themselves in order to fit in with the school’s values and practices as a way of negotiating their way in the system (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). These studies show that attitudes and practices held at the end of student teaching are often abandoned by the end of the first year. For example, Tafa (2004) found that in Botswana, as a process of socialisation, beginning teachers changed their teaching methodologies. In Botswana the junior secondary school was characterised with authoritarian teaching methods, which were rooted in the dominant positivist view of curriculum knowledge as consisting of incontestable ‘facts’ to be ‘instilled’ into the passive students. Curriculum developers, teachers as well as students accepted this authoritarian perspective. Tafa (2004:756) noted that at the end of the first year of teaching:

... much of the college-induced behaviourism had disappeared while the positivist outlook was retained. Whole teaching usually with no teaching aids, became the order of the day, student participation was curtailed and caning was regularly used and defended.

These studies depict the workplace environment as a powerful variable in the process of becoming a teacher, because it not only shapes the new teachers' professional behaviour, but it also leads to a re-analysis of the new teachers' thinking and practices (Flores, 2001). The socialisation process is in fact more complex, since schools generally contain multiple ideologies, and different individuals within the same school may hold different ideologies (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997).

Several factors have been attributed to the negative experiences of teachers in their first year. Some studies have identified lack of support to beginning teachers as a cause of the problems. For instance, a longitudinal study by Holy & Spero (2005), using multiple quantitative assessments of efficacy from entry into a teacher education programme to the induction year, found that there were significant increases in efficacy during the student teaching year, but significant decline during the first year of teaching. According to this study, the changes in efficacy during the first year of teaching were related to the level of support received. So & Watkins (2005) also noted that the level of planning amongst beginning teachers declined at the end of the first year. Their study concluded that beginning teachers require continuous support to enable them to cope with professional demands.

Similarly, in a study of the induction needs of Agriculture teachers in Botswana, Mokgatle & Acker (2002) also found that beginning teachers experienced problems due to lack of support in the first year of teaching. The fundamental forms of support required by the beginning teachers included provision of a mentor teacher, feedback, lesson observations, reduced work load, beginning teacher handbook and in-service training. Furthermore, Mokgatle & Acker (1999, 2002) contend that in Botswana the treatment of beginning teachers is critical for ensuring that they remain in the system. There are several other studies that have confirmed that beginning teachers require support in order to be able to develop further and avoid possible burnout (Maynard & Furlong, 1995; Weiss,

1999).

Other studies have argued that the school context is one of the most important factors that determine the success in a beginning teacher's career. These studies show that the school context shapes what is present for a beginning teacher to come to know (Craig, 1998), what is authorised as good teaching, and who authorises knowledge (Flores, 2001; Rust, 1994). Rosenholtz (1991) contends that the social organisation of the school context is, in fact, the reality definer of everyday life in teaching. These studies have also shown that beginning teachers are affected by the conditions of the work place, such as school leadership, culture and teacher autonomy (Weiss, 1999). Furthermore, Weiss (1999: 869) observed that in the United States the system lets down most beginning teachers through its failure to provide a supportive school context:

Too many new teachers are initiated into a profession that too often sets them to fail. The system seems to neglect that new teachers are exceptionally vulnerable to the effects of unsupportive work place conditions; precisely because of never having taught before, they lack the resources and tools to deal with the frustrations of the work place.

Further supporting the role of the school context are the findings of Williams, Prestage & Bedward (2001, cited in So & Watkins 2005), which show that relationships with colleagues in the school are important for beginning teachers. They argue that this is one of the most influential factors in teacher socialisation and important for the development of beginning teachers. According to Williams *et al.* (2001), if a beginning teacher's colleagues pursue a culture of individualism (as opposed to collaboration), this would potentially damage the new teacher's development or even affect the long-term interest of the teacher in the school. From all these findings it indeed seems clear that the school context plays an enormously important role in the socialisation of new teachers into the teaching profession.

Although most of the research findings support the view that beginning teachers are vulnerable to pressures of the institutional setting, there are some studies that indicate some exceptions. For instance, the results of a case study of one beginning teacher by Herbert & Worthy (2001) illustrate an instance of success in beginning teaching. The findings show that success in teaching was not only the result of a positive interplay between personal background, experiences during teacher preparation and workplace characteristics (school context), but the teacher's perceptions and interpretations of her school setting were also important. Similarly, Solmon, Worthy, & Carter (1993) found that, despite experiencing challenges typical of first-year teaching, their participants were able to adapt to situations, gain self-confidence with experience, and achieve a sense of accomplishment.

Zeichner & Tabachnick (1985) made similar observations about successful experiences in beginning teaching. While they agreed with the notion of the conservative nature of the first-year teachers and the desire of most of them just to fit in, they observed that some teachers did not fit into this pattern. Rather, these beginning teachers tended to be significantly more reflective, active and thoughtful about their teaching and the process of becoming a teacher. Reflection was the main characteristic associated with their success in the first year of teaching.

The existence of new teachers who succeed calls into question the notion that the first year is necessarily problematic. Rather, it suggests that a degree of variability exists in the relative success of beginning teachers, and calls attention to the importance of understanding the experiences of different beginning teachers, describing their experiences, and seeking factors which help to explain their success or failure.

There are also some contradictory and inconclusive findings in the study of teacher socialisation. For example, in a study of teacher thinking processes from being a student teacher to the beginning year, So & Watkins (2005) found both positive and negative progress in the beginning teachers. Positive findings in the study were that the majority of the participants became more constructive in terms of their conceptions of teaching practices. The negative findings were that the teachers also tended to become more simplistic in planning and less coherent in their thinking processes as they progressed from pre-service teacher education to beginning teaching. Although the study concludes by emphasising the need for mentoring in beginning teaching, the results do not explain the possible causes of the differences in development.

2.3.2 *Developmental stages in beginning teaching*

A second perspective in the studies on beginning teachers suggests that teachers go through a series of developmental stages. For instance, in analysing characteristics of the first year of teaching, Maynard & Furlong (1995: 12-13) observed that novice teachers go through five stages: early idealism, survival, recognising difficulties, reaching a plateau, and moving on. *Early idealism*, the first stage, is where the beginning teacher strongly identifies with the students, while s/he rejects the image of the older cynical teachers. *The survival* stage sees the beginning teacher reacting to the reality shock of the classroom and feeling overwhelmed by its complexity. The beginning teacher tries to survive with 'quick fix' methods. The next stage, *recognizing difficulties*, is where the beginning teacher gains an awareness of the difficulties of teaching and begins to recognise that teachers are limited in terms of what they can achieve. Beginning teachers then enter the *reaching a plateau* stage, where they start coping successfully with the routines of teaching and developing resistance to trying new approaches and methods so as not to upset the newly developed routines. They are focused on successful classroom management and not so much on student learning. It is only later that they tend to focus more on the quality of student learning as the beginning teacher moves into the 'moving on' stage of development (Maynard & Furlong, 1995).

Other studies on beginning teachers have also indicated more or less similar developmental patterns as characteristics of the beginning year in teaching (e.g. Fuller & Bown, 1975; Kagan, 1992). A significant and common characteristic of most of the teacher induction frameworks is that they all characterise the first year as one of difficulty, survival and frustration. This is further support for the argument that the beginning year in teaching is often coupled with problems and difficulty.

2.3.3 Teacher induction and support programmes

In response to the problems experienced by beginning teachers reported in the past literature, the approach of the new millennium has seen the growth of several different forms and views of induction programmes in the literature. Huling-Austin (1990: 536) defined induction programmes in education as planned programmes “intended to provide some systematic and sustained assistance, specifically to beginning teachers for at least one school year.” Wong & Wong (1998: v) add that “induction is a structured program that takes place before the first day of school for all newly hired teachers.” Mere orientation meetings or evaluations, without planned, formal assistance leading to the fulfilment of professional goals, are therefore, not a part of true induction programmes (Lawson, 1992).

The current emphasis on formal induction programmes suggests a belief that success for new teachers begins with a solid induction (Wong & Wong, 1998). According to Wolfe, Bartell & DeBolt (2000:47), quality induction and mentoring programmes “recognize the multidimensional environments within which they exist”. This serves to support the emphasis on the importance of a knowledge of the school context for the beginning teacher. Induction programmes, therefore, should not only provide assistance with technical educational issues, they should also provide the new teacher with opportunities to begin to understand the school’s culture and the effect of that culture on the school’s climate (White &

Moss, 2003). According to a review of induction programmes in Scotland, teacher induction programmes are able to slow down teacher attrition, screen out incompetent teachers, improve student achievement, break down the isolation inherent in the profession, and eliminate the 'brain drain' of urban teachers to the suburbs (White & Moss, 2003).

Another form of support provided to beginning teachers in the literature is mentoring. Mentoring can be defined as "a professional practice that occurs in the context of teaching whenever an experienced teacher supports, challenges, and guides novice teachers in the teaching practice" (Odell & Huling, 2000:xii). A mentor is therefore an experienced teacher who, as part of his or her professional assignment, supports pre-service or beginning teachers as they learn to teach (Odell & Huling, 2000). Based on these definitions, many researchers have debated the issue of which techniques for mentoring are most effective (Abell, Dillion, Hopkins, McInerney & O'Brien, 1995; Huling-Austin, 1992; RNT, 2000; Schaffer, Stringfield & Wolfe, 1992; Wildman, Magliaro & Niles, 1992). These studies show that there are some techniques that have proven to be effective when dealing with new teachers. First is the idea of reflection (Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Wildman *et al.*, 1992; Stanulis, 1995; Watkins & Whalley, 1995). The studies show that mentors should encourage reflection in new teachers in order to draw them into a meaningful deliberation about the various choices they might consider in reaching their own conclusions or solutions to problems, questions and dilemmas. Regular meetings between a mentor and a beginning teacher can easily accommodate such reflection as can the encouragement of maintaining a teaching journal.

A second effective technique is the directive and supporting action that mentors provide to new teachers. This concerns mentors using their expertise to help beginners detect problem areas and to remind them of school policies and procedures. Part of this technique includes the provision of specific, intact products or procedures for the new teacher to use (Wildman *et al.*, 1992; Abell,

et al., 1995). This research further suggests that in order to take full advantage of this technique, mentors must be released and given time to observe beginning teaches and engage in discussions with them.

A third mentoring techniques that has proven to be successful includes the direct assistance mentors give new teachers, namely the hand-in-hand work done with the new teacher in order to ensure success in their new profession (Odell & Ferraro, 1992; Wildman *et al.*, 1992). This implies good communication skills between mentors and new teachers. Schools can actually anticipate communication problems and plan accordingly by placing beginning teachers and their mentors as close to one another as possible in the school building (Watkins & Whalley, 1995). Other administrative requirements that must be in place in order to maximise the effectiveness of a mentor/teacher relationship include flexible meeting times that allow for the most effective use of time (Abell *et al.*, 1995) and the matching of content areas of the mentors and the new teachers with whom they work (Huling-Austin, 1992).

Studies on mentorship also show that the most effective mentors also supply emotional support to new teachers about personal as well as professional matters (Abell *et al.*, 1995). This emotional support also helps to firmly establish the bond of trust that must exist between a mentor and a new teacher if this dyad is to succeed (Abell *et al.*, 1995).

Mentoring appears to be the commonly used forms of support given to beginning teachers in different induction programmes. In a Dutch experimental study by Stokking *et al.*, (2003) it was reported that the use of mentors and supervisors had a profound effect on reducing practice shocks and dropout rate. Effective mentoring is therefore indicated as an important practice in this area of the literature. Furthermore, Graham (1997) points out that effective mentoring should

also address individualised needs that are inherent in any kind of teaching process.

A guide on the development of induction programmes in Belmont identified the qualities of mentoring and induction programmes that were valued and suggests that such programmes: (1) focus on helping novices learn to teach in accordance with professional standards, (2) are responsive to the evolving needs of individual novices and their students, (3) view becoming a good teacher as a developmental process, (4) view mentoring as a professional practice that must be learned and developed over time, (5) include careful selection, preparation, and on-going development for new mentors, (6) involve experienced teachers as mentors and include mentors in program design and evaluation, (7) are collaboratively planned, implemented, and evaluated by key stakeholders, and (8) contribute to improving school and district cultures for teaching, learning, and learning to teach (Odell, Huling & Sweeny, 2000).

Not all research concerning teacher induction programmes is positive. There are some researchers who have identified problems with induction programmes (Abell *et al.*, 1995; Wildman *et al.*, 1992; Ruff & Shoho, 2001). In the United States, for example, one of the main problems reported is that, since each school has its own unique culture, a one-size-fits-all programme will not work for all schools (Lawson, 1992). The majority of the research that has been done points to the individualised nature of teaching and teacher development, and consequently researchers have argued that it is ironic that states are depending more and more on standardised forms of testing instead of recognising that the key to better teacher development lies in a true understanding of individualised school cultures (Weiner, 2000).

Time to implement these programmes is another problem (Wildman *et al.*, 1992).

Most induction programmes last only one year, but educators have noted that even though “the orientation phase of the process may conclude after the first year, induction should continue in order to develop teachers’ repertoires of skills and to inculcate teaching as a career” (Hope, 1999: 54).

Another problem with formal induction programmes is that they usually do not address the large body of knowledge that new teachers learn tacitly. Both educational and anthropological experts agree that one of the main ways a person learns a new culture, in this case that of the school, is through tacit learning (Chambers & Roper, 2000; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 1999; Rogoff, 1995; White, 1989). Not acknowledging this type of learning can “isolate people from the sorts of ongoing practice of work itself” (Brown & Duguid, 2000:129).

Lawson (1992) pointed out several other problems with the implementation of induction programmes. He observed that most programmes try to do too much, some programmes unintentionally foster competition among teachers, programmes are sometimes designed in ways that often neglect teachers’ real needs, and some may fail to accommodate the personal developmental needs of teachers. There is also research that shows that induction can lead to teacher burnout. In their attempt to become expert teachers, some novice teachers believe they must achieve this within the first year of induction. This belief can drive new teachers to over-achieve, which can result in teacher burnout.

Finally, the research has also identified inadequate funding as yet another area that makes induction programmes problematic. Insufficient financial resources were identified as a hiccup to providing the desired induction programme to cover expenses in some states in the USA (White & Moss, 2003).

In Malawi, where the present study was conducted, the education and school systems do not provide any formal induction programme to beginning teachers. This study serves as a means of analysing how beginning teachers are currently socialised into the school system.

2.4 Roles of teacher research

Teacher research is an important means by which teachers can develop their capacity for making the kinds of sound autonomous professional judgments and decisions appropriate to their status as professionals (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004). Yet teacher research is a highly contested area of study for which there are areas of agreement and areas of disagreement. Some of the important debated issues related to this area include: the role of research paradigms that have been used over time, the role of subject-matter knowledge in teaching, the role of teacher education programmes, and the role of practice and theory in teaching.

2.4.1 Role of research paradigms

Early studies on teacher research focussed on statistical relationships between what teachers know and the achievements of their students (Barnes, 1989; Grossman, Wilson & Shulman, 1989). The results in most of this research showed little or no correlation between the two variables, suggesting the complexity of the phenomenon. Research in education now acknowledges that the relationship between teacher knowledge and student achievement is more than a simple linear relationship which can be measured in a one-to-one unidirectional relationship (Calderhead, 1987; Grossman *et al.*, 1989). Thus, later research saw a shift from a unidirectional emphasis of correlates of observable teacher behaviour with student achievement to a focus on teachers' thinking, beliefs, planning, organisation, decision-making processes and knowledge of subject matter (Calderhead, 1987; Grossman *et al.*, 1989; So & Watkins, 2005).

Teachers are now viewed as active participants in the learning process, who actively construct meaning through experience. Similarly, learning is now viewed as an active process of construction of meaning by the learner and not something that is imparted by the teacher (So & Watkins, 2005; Solomon, 1997).

Teacher research has been strongly criticised for failing to properly inform research and practice in beginning teaching (Calderhead, 1993). Shulman (1986), in his contribution to the *Third Handbook of Research on Teaching* suggests that teacher research has been narrowly focused, too influenced by previous product-process research, and unproductive for teaching and teacher education. McNamara (1990:153) criticised the research in teaching for failing to generate a “corpus of findings which teacher educators can incorporate into their teaching so as to foster on student teachers’ capacity to reflect critically upon their practice and thereby improve their teaching.” Most of this criticism is based on the positivistic approach used in the early teacher studies (Barnes, 1989; Grossman *et al.*, 1989), which also became the dominant paradigm in beginning teacher research. Kuzmic (1994) observed that the approach has had two harmful consequences in the efforts to understand learning to teach/socialization of teachers:

Firstly, little effort has been made to explore the teaching perspectives of beginning teachers as they are formed, developed, framed, and changed over the course of time and within the context of the lived reality of these teachers. Second, by focusing on groups, individuals have come to be viewed as powerless to resist the biographical or institutional forces which shape their views of teaching so as to conform with traditional norms and values which operate within schools (Kuzmic, 1994:16).

The present study sought to address the concerns raised by Kuzmic (1994) by focusing on the professional experiences of beginning teachers within their specific school contexts and through use of a qualitative research design as is discussed in the next chapter.

2.4.2 Role of subject matter knowledge

Although knowledge of subject matter is widely accepted as a central component of what teachers need to know, research in teaching has not focused on the development of teachers' subject matter knowledge (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990). There is evidence that early studies on teaching had little reference to subject matter knowledge (Fischler, 1999; So & Watkins, 2005). Shulman (1986:6) referred to this as the "missing paradigm" in the teacher knowledge literature. Subject matter knowledge refers to having a sound knowledge of the subject area that the teacher teaches. A deep and broad subject matter knowledge in teaching is essential, because it ensures that beginning teachers have enough grounding in the content of the subject area that they will teach in school (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990; Grossman *et al.*, 1989).

Teaching involves the translation of subject matter knowledge (content) into subject matter for teaching (Grossman *et al.*, 1989). During teaching, teachers interweave their prior knowledge of the subject with immediate knowledge of the classroom realities in order to create relevant knowledge for learning a topic. Therefore, it would appear obvious to claim that teachers need to know what they are teaching, and yet there is no agreement about what is included in the idea of knowing the subject matter for teaching (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990). In exploring this problem Grossman *et al.*, (1989) categorised subject matter necessary for teachers into four overlapping dimensions: content knowledge, substantive knowledge, syntactic knowledge and beliefs about subject matter.

Content knowledge is the factual information, organising principles, the central concepts of a subject area, or "the stuff" of the discipline (Grossman *et al.*, 1989:27). Grossman *et al.*, (1989) observed that content knowledge or the lack of it can affect the way that teachers critique their work, how they select material to teach, how they structure the courses and how they conduct instruction. For example, in preparing to teach unfamiliar material, new teachers relied on their

college majors to help them to select and structure the content they needed to include in their curricular. Furthermore, Grossman *et al.* (1989) also noted that depth and breadth of content knowledge also influenced the pedagogical choices that the beginning teachers made in class. They therefore concluded that depth and breadth of subject matter knowledge is important for teachers to understand the relationships between topics or skills, or to understand how more general topics in their field can be effectively taught.

The substantive dimension of a subject refers to the structures of a discipline which includes explanatory frameworks or paradigms that are used both to guide inquiry in the field and to make sense of data. In some fields, such as in physics and chemistry, a dominant structure may prevail. In others, however, multiple competing substantive structures may exist at the same time. Knowledge of the substantive structure of a subject is important to teachers, because it affects their choice of what and how to teach content. It can also have a direct influence on curriculum decisions in the subject area. Unfortunately, teacher education and undergraduate programmes usually do not have sufficient time to focus on the substantive structure of a discipline (Grossman *et al.*, 1989).

The syntactic dimension of a subject refers to the means by which new knowledge is introduced and accepted into that subject area. For example, the study of physics involves scientific inquiry, the study of literature involves literary analysis, and the study of art involves aesthetics and art criticism. Teachers with no syntactic knowledge of their subject fail to properly represent their subject. For instance, they may fail to counter effectively an argument, even if they are very much aware of its nature (Grossman *et al.*, 1989). As knowledge within a discipline changes, teachers have to be able to evaluate new theories and explanations on the basis of the evidence. Without syntactic knowledge beginning teachers may be unable to distinguish between more and less legitimate claims within a field. Therefore syntactic knowledge is important for teachers to help them in their responsibility in keeping abreast of, and evaluating

critically, new developments in their field and to expose their students to the basis upon which new knowledge is accepted (Grossman *et al.*, 1989).

The last dimension of subject matter is beliefs about subject/content. The research on subject knowledge for teaching shows that, because teachers treat their beliefs as knowledge, the beliefs that they hold about a subject powerfully affect their teaching (Grossman *et al.*, 1989). Beliefs therefore were found to influence what teachers choose to teach and how they teach it.

Furthermore, Shulman (1986:9) argues that teachers must not only be capable of defining for students the acceptable truths within a domain, they must also be able to explain why a “particular proposition is deemed warranted, why it is worth knowing, and how it relates to other propositions.” This kind of understanding requires teachers to have knowledge of all the dimensions of subject matter knowledge.

Because subject matter is such an important aspect of teaching, it seemed necessary to focus this study on teacher experiences within a particular subject rather than exploring experiences across subjects. This study was thus based on experiences of Home Economics teachers. Literature on the teaching of beginning Home Economics teachers is very limited. Therefore this study provides new perspectives in the teaching of the subject.

2.5 Practical vs. theoretical knowledge in pre-service teacher training

The value and credibility of pre-service teacher education programmes have often been questioned in the literature (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Criticism has mostly arisen from the practice shocks experienced by

beginning teachers. However, some scholars have argued that the claim that beginning teachers can function as knowledgeable novices is based on a positivistic perspective on knowledge, grounded in the early quantitative research designs. From a quantitative perspective, knowledge in beginning teaching can be conceptually organised, presented and communicated in ways that encourage beginning teachers to create a deep understanding of teaching and learning (Barnes, 1989). However, the emerging view of learning as thought in action emphasises forms in knowing that present “a fundamentally different way of thinking about professional practice, one in which theory emerges out of practice and practice informs theory” (Smyths, 1987:573 cited in Barnes, 1989). Perceived from this perspective, it can be argued that in teaching the theory is not separated from the practice. Therefore teachers and beginning teachers should always question, criticise and reformulate assumptions about the nature of their work through “reflective conversation with the situation” (Schon, 1987). Based on this perspective, Barnes (1989:17) argued that:

The challenge for teacher educators is to create programs of initial preparation that develop the beginners inclination and capacity to engage in the sort of intellectual dialogue and principled action required for effective teaching.

There seems to be a general agreement in the literature that reflection helps to prepare ‘reflective practitioners’. The process of reflection is defined as reviewing, reconstructing, re-enacting and critically analysing one’s own and the class’s performance and grounding the explanation in evidence (Shulman, 1987). Reflection, therefore, involves both a process of monitoring and adapting one’s behaviour in context (reflection in action) and a process of evaluating an event to analyse where difficulties were experienced (reflection on action) (Schon, 1987). According to Calderhead & Shorrock (1997: 16), reflection helps beginning teachers to be able to:

- Analyse, discuss, evaluate and change their own practice;
- Heighten the awareness of the contexts in which they work;
- Appreciate the moral and ethical issues implicit in their practice; and
- Empower themselves to take control of their own professional growth and

influence future directions in education

While the ongoing discussion suggests that pre-service teacher education is sufficient for providing skilful teachers by ensuring that they train 'reflective practitioners', ironically, in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States, where most of the research on teaching has been based, the trend in initial teacher training has now shifted towards an immediate practical orientation (Calderhead, 1993). Calderhead (1993:12) observed that in the UK there has been increasing emphasis on the importance of "subject matter knowledge rather than pedagogy, classroom experience rather than college experience, the practical rather than the theoretical, and the notion of apprenticeship had re-emerged with the development of various school-based alternative training schemes."

A similar trend was also reported in the USA, where there has also emerged an increase in a practical orientation in pre-service teacher education. The increase in a practical orientation in the USA has been attributed to the increasing demand for teachers who can teach the growing number of culturally diverse students (Burant & Kirby, 2002). This follows research findings in the country which indicated that field experience in diverse schools is a possible solution in multicultural education, which is one of the main pressures in education in the USA (Grant & Secada, 1990).

One explanation of the shift in trends as observed in the UK and USA is that cultural and contextual factors determine teachers' roles, which in turn affect the way that the teachers are trained (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Zeichner, 1983). For instance, Calderhead & Shorrock (1997) noted that there were substantial variations in how school teachers thought about their roles and responsibility in France, Spain and in the UK. They therefore concluded that views about the roles of teachers are culturally embedded. This then implies that the way teachers' work is conceptualised influences their

professional preparation and suggestions for professional development. These varying conceptions of teacher education have also been responsible for the diverse and contradictory ways in which teacher education is conducted in different countries (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). The professional knowledge of beginning teachers is therefore best based within the contextual framework within which teaching is conducted.

Yet it should be noted that most of the research on teacher socialisation, the majority of it in the USA and Europe, has been conducted in non-African contexts and yet considered universal despite the contextual and cultural issues (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Watkins & Biggs, 1996). Therefore, although the literature on teacher socialisation experiences abounds, as noted earlier, there is still need for a Malawi-specific study that will take into account the cultural and contextual issues in the country.

2.6 Professional development and growth in beginning teaching

Exploring beginning teaching experiences, which is the focus in this study, requires an understanding of professional knowledge in teaching. Thus, professional knowledge in beginning teaching can only be defined if a clear understanding is established of what constitutes good teaching. Yet the question of what constitutes good teaching has been one that has intrigued and challenged scholars for many centuries. The question has also generated diverse answers, varying in nature and degree of specificity in different countries and across different periods in history (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). In the literature scholars have emphasised different aspects of a teacher's role such as teachers as subject specialists; teachers as facilitators of learning; teachers as motivators; or teachers as upholders of moral standards. In most countries the roles of the teacher have become an area of great interest and scrutiny. This is mostly because of the realisation that schools are not only institutions where children acquire knowledge and skills, but are also places where children learn to

socialise, to cooperate with others, learn about the world of work and prepare for responsible citizenship (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). Banks, Mayes, Oakes & Sultton (2001: 12) summarised the professional development of teachers as the acquisition or extension of the knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities that will enable individual teachers, schools and learning institutions to:

- Develop and adapt their range of practice;
- Reflect on their experience, research practice, and practice in order to meet pupils' needs, collectively and individually;
- Contribute to the professional life of the school, and as a practitioner interact with the school community and internal agencies;
- Give critical consideration to educational policy, in particular how to raise standards;
- Widen their understanding of society, in particular of information and communication technology (ICT).

Although research in teacher education does not at present provide a comprehensive theory of professional development, as a result of the complexity of defining the concept of teaching (Calderhead, 1993), several frameworks have been developed that attempt to define the professional knowledge and development of beginning teachers. Three of these are from Calderhead & Shorrock (1997), the Association for Science Education (ASE) framework and the work of Lortie (1975).

Calderhead & Shorrock (1997:11-18) categorised the professional growth of beginning teachers into five models that emphasise the specifics of growth in learning to teach. These are:

- The enculturation or socialisation into the professional culture model;
- The technical, or knowledge and skills model;
- Relationship between personal and professional in teachers' work;

- Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK);
- Reflection.

Calderhead & Shorrock (1997) contend that because teaching is a highly complex process that places heavy demands on the beginning teacher, each of the five categories identifies an important set of variables relating to professional development.

A second framework on beginning teachers' professional knowledge was developed in the United Kingdom (UK) by the Association for Science Education (ASE) (Banks *et al.*, 2001). This framework includes the following seven categories:

- Subject knowledge and understanding;
- Pedagogical content knowledge;
- Development of teaching and assessment skills;
- Understanding teaching and learning;
- The wider curriculum and other changes affecting teaching;
- Management skills: managing people;
- Management skills: managing yourself and your professional development.

A third model is from Lortie (1975), who quoted Aristotle's three forms of knowledge as essential in teaching: *techne* (technical knowledge), *episteme* (theoretical knowledge) and *pronesis* (practical wisdom) - which is also referred to as educational experience.

The different frameworks share a common viewpoint in that teaching involves the

application of several complex activities. Teaching goes beyond mere application of a set of acquired techniques and skills. It also does not rely on the mere mastery of technical skills, but requires the construction of knowledge and meaning in an ongoing and challenging dialogue (Flores, 2001; Lortie, 1975).

Although some of the concepts in the theoretical frameworks are similar or related, there is still no common theoretical framework for understanding the professional growth that occurs in the early stages of a teacher's career because of the many processes, variables and concepts that are involved in teaching (Berliner, 2001; Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). Moreover, teachers' knowledge takes various forms. Some of it is easily articulated while other aspects of their knowledge are embedded within action and can not be put into words (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997). A framework for exploring the experiences of beginning teachers, therefore, requires one to consider and accommodate these complexities of the teaching process.

Calderhead (1993:17) argues that the development of such a framework can only be established through use of "an eclectic, exploratory approach to (teacher) development (which) will avoid the inevitable imprisonment in restricted ways of thinking about teaching and learning to teach".

In a similar argument, Yinger & Hendricks-Lee (1993) argued for an ecological perspective on teacher research and teacher education. Ecological intelligence is a view of working knowledge grounded in systematic and holistic notions of learning, knowledge, practice and relationships (Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 1993). Ecological intelligence is a model of knowledge and action having three characteristics:

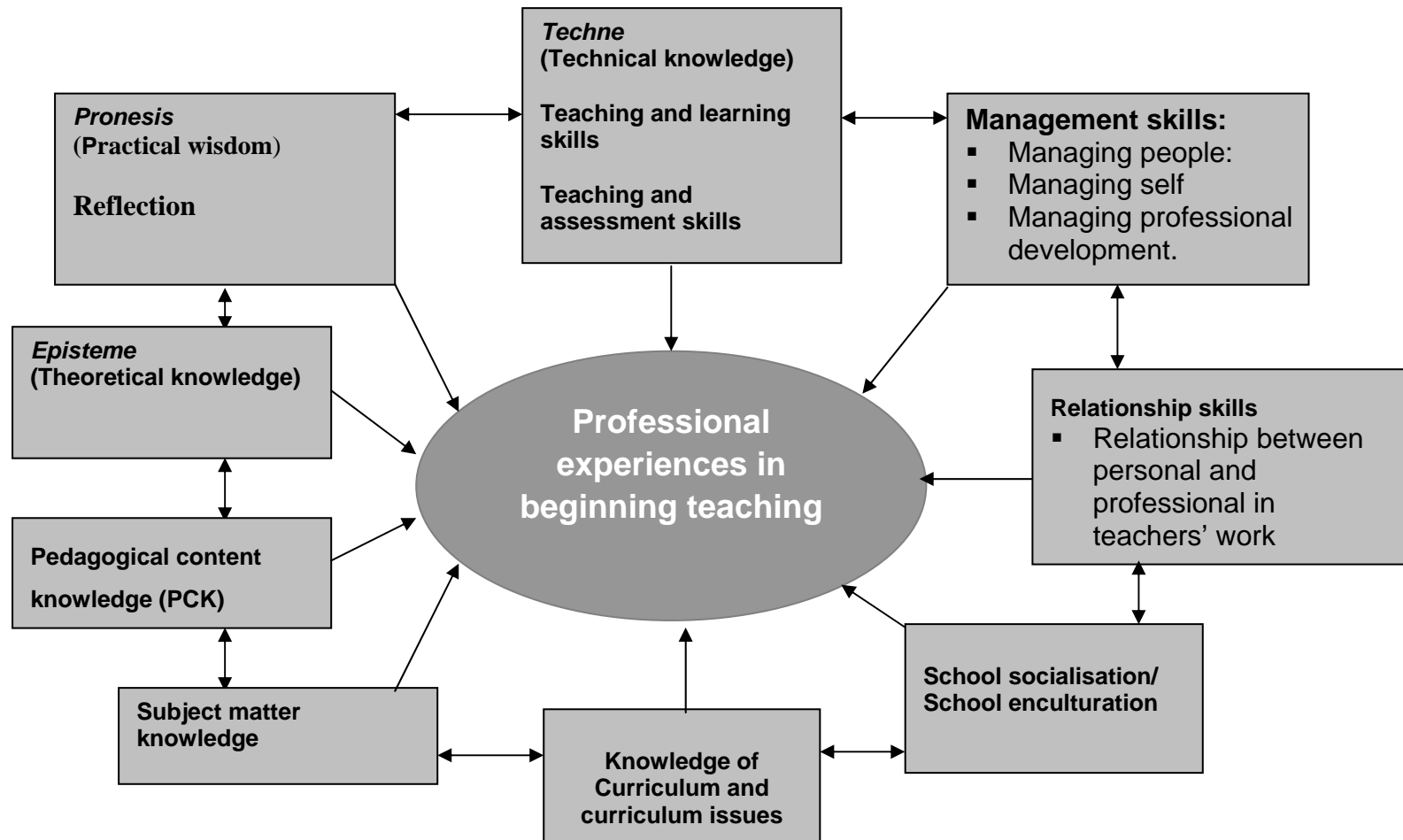
- Knowledge is inherent and widely dispersed in systems;
- Knowledge becomes available as working knowledge in particular activities and events;

- Working knowledge is constructed jointly by participants (systems) in an activity.

Ecological intelligence is a more inclusive term that shifts the focus from individual cognitive processing and technical action to the relationship between the individual and the environment (Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 1993). Cognitive intelligence emphasises that intelligence is embedded in social, cultural and practical interchanges as well as in individuals. Thus intelligence is not solely a matter of mind and person, but also action and place. This view stands in contrast to the widely acknowledged notion of knowledge as being solely acquired by individuals. An ecological perspective to the teaching process stands in parallel to the complex theory of teaching. Both recognise that teaching is a process that requires the interplay of several factors.

Based on this realisation of the complex nature of knowledge in teaching, the present study attempted to encompass both an eclectic and ecological perspective. The study adopted an interactive framework (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1985) and used concepts from the three frameworks of professional knowledge in beginning teaching (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; ASE, 2000; Lortie, 1975) as the basis for exploring the research questions in this study. An interactive view emphasises not only the potential contributions of the individual to the process of becoming a teacher, but also the highly context-specific nature of the process. It was perceived that it was only through such a broad-based and interactive process that it would be possible to explore and uncover a true picture of the lives, challenges, problems and opportunities of the beginning teachers. Figure 2.1 is a synthesis reflecting the complexity of professional experiences of teachers as extracted from this literature on the professional knowledge of teachers. The framework shows that skills required are both technical and theoretical, as these are interwoven in the practice of teaching.

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual framework: Complex and interactive nature of professional experiences in beginning teaching



Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

3.1 Introduction

As outlined in Chapters One and Two the impetus for this study arose from my own teaching as a Home Economics teacher educator. I wanted to understand how beginning Home Economics teachers experience the transition from student teaching to beginning teaching, as well as the challenges and problems that they experience in the first year of their career. Therefore, the study focus was on Home Economics teachers who were in their first year of teaching after graduating from the University of Malawi, Chancellor College, in 2005.

This chapter presents the research design and methodology of the study. I begin the chapter by presenting the theoretical perspectives that eventually led to the choice of an interpretive research design. Next, I describe grounded theory as the interpretive research methodology and analytical framework. This discussion is followed by an explanation of how data development proceeded in the field and how reliability and validity were ensured during the research process. In the last section I outline my roles as a researcher and their impact on the study.

3.2 Theoretical perspectives

The broad theoretical and philosophical framework of this study is based on qualitative research. Qualitative research is naturalistic, holistic and inductive (Patton, 1990; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Qualitative research believes that human behaviour is best studied within the social, linguistic and historical features which give it shape. Thus qualitative research allows the study of phenomena as they unfold in real life situations without manipulation (Kelly, 1999). Furthermore, qualitative research is less concerned with creating

universal law-like patterns of human behaviour, but more concerned with making sense of human experiences from within the context and from the perspective of human experience (Kelly, 1999). Therefore, when using qualitative research, it is possible to describe social phenomena as they occur naturally, and also to develop possible explanations or representations of social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Based on this Denzin & Lincoln (2000: 3) accept the definition of qualitative research as “situated activity that locates the observer in the world”, and consisting of “interpretive, material practices that make the world visible”. These characteristics of qualitative research were important for this study, since they made it possible for me to enter into the lives of the beginning teachers and uncover what their initial professional experiences were like. It also made it possible for the voices of the teachers to be heard.

Qualitative research is a complex, interconnected field of inquiry that cuts across disciplines, fields and subject matter. Because qualitative research is “an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and sometimes counterdisciplinary field” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 7), it has come to mean several things to different people. For instance, Schwandt (1997: 129) noted that:

the term “qualitative research” tends to be used by most scholars as a blanket for a range of inquiry including phenomenology, ethnography, case study research, naturalistic inquiry, life history and narrative inquiry.... as a modifier for terms “data”, “analysis”, “method”, “methodology”, “research” “inquiry and paradigm”, as well as a synonym for “nonexperimental” and “ethnographic”.

Based on such observations, Gough (1993), Lather (1991) and Le Grange (2000) have argued that the term ‘qualitative’ is inadequate for describing contemporary social science research. This makes it imperative to locate the specific philosophical systems that informed this study.

In the social sciences the fundamental philosophical systems that distinguish approaches to research are referred to as research paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Research paradigms are thus defined as sets of basic beliefs and feelings

about the world and how it should be studied, which provide frameworks for the entire research process (Creswell, 1994, 1998; Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Each of these paradigms can be characterised by the way their proponents respond to three basic assumptions/questions of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontological assumptions are concerned with the nature and form of reality and determine what constitute “legitimate,” researchable questions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Epistemological assumptions deal with the nature of knowledge and what counts as knowledge. It is concerned with questions about the nature of the relationship between the inquirer/knower and the known. Finally, methodological assumptions deal with the procedures researchers use to investigate what they believe can be known, and the rationales behind these procedures (Babbie, 2004; Guba, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999).

Assumptions embedded in each of the paradigms are interdependent. That is, assumptions about the nature of reality (ontological assumptions) are logically related to assumptions about the nature of knowledge (epistemological assumptions), which are logically related to assumptions about procedures for investigating what can be known (methodological assumptions). Therefore, each paradigm contains a set of assumptions that are coherently related in a unique way and have practical implications for the conduct, interpretation and utilisation of research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The first and earliest paradigm to be used was positivism. Following a critique of positivism as inadequate to inform human experiences and social phenomena (Connole, 1993; Lather, 1986a, 1991), several competing post-positivist paradigms have emerged which include interpretivism, critical theory, constructivism, participatory, feminist-interpretivism, structuralism and poststructuralism (Guba, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Table 3.1 presents the ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives of four of these paradigms.

Table 3.1: Positivist, interpretive, critical theory and poststructuralist paradigms

	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology
Positivist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stable external reality - Law-like 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objective - Detached observer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experimental - Quantitative - Hypothesis testing
Interpretive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal reality of subjective experience - Multiple realities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Empathetic - Observer intersubjectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interactional - Interpretant - Qualitative
Critical theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, and gender values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transactional/subjectivist - Value-mediated findings - Emancipatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dialogical/dialectical - Transformative - Participative
Poststructuralist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no reality or real world accessible to us beyond language. - Reality is constituted in and through language as discourse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interactive - Subjective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dialogical/dialectical - Transformative - Deconstructive

Source: Connole (1993); Guba (1990); Guba & Lincoln (1998); Lincoln & Guba (2000) Terre Blanche & Durrheim (1999).

This study is based on the interpretive paradigm. In the next section I explain why the interpretive paradigm was best suited for this study.

3.3 Research design and methodology

According to Durrheim (2006), a research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the implementation of the research. In developing a research design, the choice of the paradigm constitutes one of the key tasks, as it is what informs the whole research process. The aim of this study was to advance an understanding of beginning Home Economics teachers' perception of their situation as new teachers and how this affected their teaching. Beginning teachers in this study were seen as experiencing the professional demands of their profession. The interpretive research paradigm with its emphasis on experience and interpretation was therefore most appropriate for the purpose of gauging their professional experiences.

3.3.1 *The interpretive paradigm*

This study was fundamentally concerned with ‘meaning’ and it sought to understand beginning teachers’ perceptions of their experiences. The ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of the interpretive research paradigm made it possible to conduct such a study.

Ontologically, the interpretive paradigm denies the existence of an objective reality (reality is mind dependent and influenced by the process of observation), and its focus is discovering the multiple perspectives of all the players in a social setting (Babbie, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Thus, the aim of interpretive paradigm is to capture the emic perspective; that is, peoples’ perspective on their lived experience, not some objective notion of that experience. It is assumed that meanings are embedded in a person’s history, language, and actions, and that these can be identified in the course of field work through observation of people’s actions and interactions. The interpretive paradigm thus focuses on process: “the processes by which meanings are created, negotiated, sustained and modified within a specific context of human action” (Schwandt, 1994: 120).

Since the interpretive paradigm holds the preposition that social reality is inter-subjectively constructed, and that we can only understand other people’s experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they have to say (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999), this world view has a commitment to “understanding human phenomena in context, as they are lived using context derived terms and categories” (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Research in the interpretive paradigm is therefore able to produce rich descriptive analyses that emphasise a deep, interpretive understanding of social phenomena.

A further characteristic of interpretive studies is that they are idiographic, and therefore concerned with the individual case. Although the current study was not a case study, studies of a subtle and complex phenomenon like the present one require in-depth examination of individual cases of beginning teachers in order to generate a clear understanding of the whole phenomenon.

In this dissertation study, I sought to understand, describe and interpret the professional experiences of the six teachers, and to give meaning to the phenomena that they encountered. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the interpretive paradigm was best suited to answering the research questions.

3.3.2 Research methodology

Research methodology refers to the principles and philosophy on which researchers base their procedures and strategies, and the assumptions that they hold about the nature of the research that they are carrying out (Holloway, 1997). Methodology is more than method as it consists of the ideas underlying data development and analysis, while method merely refers to the procedures and techniques adopted by the researcher. Methodology is concerned with the relationships between various parts of the study and the production of findings (Guba, 1990). It therefore deals with the rules, values and priorities given to social conditions and individual action. It is the methodology that defines what is perceived as legitimate knowledge and how that knowledge is obtained and ordered in a study (Guba, 1990). The choice of a research methodology depends on the research paradigm in order to ensure 'design coherence' in any study. Research methodology is coherent with the research paradigm when the techniques used in sampling, data development and interpretation as well as the context of the study 'fit' within the logic of the paradigm and also with the purpose of the research (Durrheim, 2006). There are several research methodologies associated with the interpretive paradigm, each of which has its own underlying philosophies, practices and methods of interpretation. These include:

phenomenology, ethnography, case study and grounded theory. The nature of this study was best suited to grounded theory as the research methodology.

3.4 Grounded theory – analytical framework

Grounded theory is a research methodology and data analysis technique that attempts to combine a naturalistic approach with a positivist concern for a systematic set of procedures in doing qualitative research. To achieve this, grounded theory uses an analytical procedure of constant comparison, with a combination of explicit coding procedures and theory development from an analysis of patterns, themes and common categories, discovered in observational data (Babbie, 2004). Grounded theory originates from the work of Glaser & Strauss (1967), *The discovery of grounded theory*. Since then the methodology has been refined and developed by many other interpretive scholars including: Charmaz (2000, 2006); Corbin & Strauss (1990); Glaser (1978, 1992, 1998); and Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1994, 1997, 1998).

Grounded theory means the inductive generation of theory from data that have been obtained systematically through research. Generating grounded theory is therefore a way of arriving at a theory suited to its purpose. Consequently, theory generated from grounded theory procedure is very closely linked to the data so that it accurately relates to the phenomena under study (Babbie, 2004). In explaining this, Glaser & Strauss (1967: 29-30) state:

Whether or not there is a previous speculative theory, discovery gives us a theory that 'fits or works' in a substantive or formal area ..., since the theory has been derived from data, not deduced from logical assumptions.

Creswell (1998) contends that in a grounded theory study, the aim is to generate or discover a theory or an abstract analytical schema of phenomena that relates to a particular situation. This situation was described as one in which individuals

interact, take actions or engage in a process, in response to a *phenomenon*. This description fitted very well with this study of beginning teachers, since they too interact and make professional actions and decisions within the school setting. Discovery of the existence of a social phenomenon that informed their professional experiences was also a desirable outcome. Grounded theory therefore provided an ideal framework for conducting this study and was consequently adopted as both the methodology and the data-analysis technique.

3.4.1 *Processes in grounded theory*

Grounded theory uses certain specific strategies to ensure methodological rigour. One of the main strategies used is the constant comparative method. The constant comparative method is a strategy in which observations (categories) are compared with one another and with the evolving inductive theory (Babbie, 2004; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Through constant comparison of all emerging categories in the data, the researcher is able to check the accuracy of the evidence being generated, establish the generality or explanatory power of a category (the extent to which an emerging category applies or is relevant), to specify concepts under study so that there is no ambiguity or similarity, and finally, to verify the theory that is generated (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

In applying the constant comparative method, the researcher looks for patterns as s/he collects and analyses the data. S/he compares incident with incident, incident with participants' accounts of it, and the later with other participants' accounts (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Through such comparisons, the researcher is able to distinguish between similarities and differences among incidences, and the incidences are clarified through creation of a core variable. The constant comparative method proceeds through a process of systematic coding, formulation of categories and memo writing. The research process proceeds in a cyclic process using *theoretical sampling*, guided by the researcher's *theoretical*

sensitivity until *theoretical saturation* is achieved.

Theoretical sampling is a data-development method in which the researcher jointly collects, codes and analyses data and uses this information to decide what data to collect next and where (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Therefore, in grounded theory the researcher establishes the initial sample, but further data collection is guided by what emerges from the data. Theoretical saturation is achieved through the interaction between data collection and data analysis. Theoretical saturation occurs when no new ideas/categories for the development of the theory emerge with subsequent data collection and analysis (Holloway, 1997).

The other strategy used is theoretical sensitivity which means that a researcher has to be sensitive to the important issues in the data (Holloway, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Theoretical sensitivity assists the researcher in theory development and it can arise from personal and professional experience or through a thorough knowledge of the relevant literature and immersion in the data (Glaser, 1978).

Strauss & Corbin (1990:44-46) argue that grounded theory allows the research to be scientific and creative at the same time, as long as the researcher follows three guidelines:

- *Periodically step back and ask:* What is going on here? Does what I see and think fit the reality of the data?
- *Maintain an attitude of scepticism:* All theoretical explanations, categories, hypotheses and questions about the data, whether they come directly or indirectly from the making of comparisons or literature or from experience, should be regarded as provisional. They always need to be checked out against the actual data, and never accepted as fact.

- *Follow the research procedures:* The data collection and analysis procedures are designed to give rigour to a study. At the same time they help to break through bias, and lead to examination of at least some of the assumptions that might otherwise lead to an unrealistic reading of the data.

Hence, grounded theory offered an opportunity for a scientifically rigorous and reliable enquiry into the experiences of beginning Home Economics teachers in Malawi.

3.4.2 Role of grounded theory in teacher research

The literature review has shown that studies on beginning teachers have been conducted with varying focus and methodologies, and with different theoretical perspectives. A consequence of this is that, although literature in the area abounds, there is no theory that can be used to guide a framework for understanding the experiences of beginning teachers. The conceptual framework developed for this study was an exploratory one, using an interactive view to ensure an eclectic and ecological perspective for the study. Grounded theory, with its inductive approach for generating theory from data, offered an ideal opportunity for the kind of holistic approach sought in this study.

Teaching is a social phenomenon and social phenomena are complex. Grounded theory methodology emphasises the need to develop many concepts and their linkages in order to capture a great deal of the variation that characterises the central phenomenon studied during a particular research project (Strauss, 1987). This characteristic added to the strength of using grounded theory methodology.

Finally, grounded theory methodology was also perceived to be ideal because it allows both the 'etic' (researcher's) and 'emic' (the participants') accounts of the

research to be heard (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This was important in this study, as it allowed both the voices of the beginning teachers as well as mine – as I am also a teacher and a teacher educator – to be heard.

3.5 Data development and analysis

In this study I use the term data development as distinct from data collection. Like Gough (1999) and Reddy (2001), I find that there is some ambiguity with the term data collection when used in a study such as this one. I contend that in this study data were developed (or generated). I argue that we produce data by our own acts of will. Data were developed in this study through the various means that I (as a researcher) chose, and were shaped by the types of questions that I posed.

Data development in a grounded theory study does not proceed through the traditional processes of research plan, data development and data analysis. Data development and data analysis occur simultaneously, because the analysis directs the sampling of data (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). However, I have separated the discussion of the two for purposes of clarity.

The first activity in the field work processes was to obtain access to the study participants (beginning Home Economics teachers) and permission from the Ministry of Education in Malawi to conduct the study (see Appendix 1). A list of all the Home Economics students who were in their first year of teaching was collected from the Dean of Education at Chancellor College, University of Malawi, where I am also employed as a lecturer. These teachers were then traced either through their contact details from Chancellor College or from their last teaching practice placement school. Out of the 105 teachers that graduated in 2005, only 19 were Home Economics beginning teachers. At the time of this study, only

eight of these were teaching in a secondary school.

I first contacted each of the nineteen teachers by phone. I later met individually with each of the eight teachers who were teaching in secondary schools. During this meeting I explained the purpose of the study and the required time and commitment. All eight teachers agreed to participate in the study and signed the Informed Consent Form (Appendix 2). I obtained a written consent from each of the teachers. I also assured each one of them of the confidentiality of their information and of their anonymity. Anonymity of participants was ensured by use of pseudonyms on all research documents as well as in this dissertation. Together with the beginning teacher, I met the Head of each school, where I introduced myself, explained my study and its purposes, and showed a copy of my permission letter to conduct the study which I had obtained from the Ministry of Education in Malawi.

Prior to data development, I pilot tested the face-to-face interview schedule. The purpose of this pilot was to check the instrument for clarity, to ensure that the research questions were adequately covered and to certify methodological issues. The pilot gave a clear picture of how much time was needed for the first in-depth interviews. It also helped me to change the sequencing of some of the questions on the schedule. The main data-collection process took place from 19th January to 30th May 2006.

3.5.1 The sample

The target sample for this study was a cohort of Home Economics teachers who graduated from the University of Malawi in 2005, as they qualified for the definition of beginning teacher used in this study. I initially started off with eight beginning teachers. However, I later focused only on six because the other two were in schools that did not offer Home Economics. I refer to the six teachers as

the sample of the study, although in fact they were the total population of beginning Home Economics teachers in Malawi in 2005.

3.5.2 Data development methods

When using grounded theory, different kinds of data are used to give the researcher different views or 'vantage points' from which to understand a category and develop its properties. These different views are called "slices of data" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 65). I obtained a multifaceted study with views from different vantage points through the use of a triangulation of data-development methods, including a questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, classroom observations, teachers' reflective diaries and focus group discussions (FGDs).

- *Questionnaire*

This study used qualitative methods. However, a questionnaire was used as a first instrument in order to collect biographical data of the beginning Home Economics teachers. These data were useful for describing characteristics of beginning Home Economics teachers in Malawi in 2005. Information about biographical details of the teachers also contributed towards additional ideas for questions for the interviews that followed (see Appendix 3).

- *Face-to-face interviews*

Qualitative interviewing is a popularly used entry point for most social science research (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002; Mason, 2000). Interviews help to map and understand the respondents' life world, because the method provides basic data for the creation of an understanding of relationships between social actors and their situation (Gaskell, 2000). Qualitative interviews may contribute to several

other endeavours. For instance, they can be the sole method and provide thick descriptions of a particular social milieu; they can be used as a basis for gathering a framework for further research, or they may be used for developing empirical data. Sometimes, the interview method also provides information that the researcher did not even think about (Mason, 2000). Gaskell (2000:399) argues that “the understanding of the life worlds of respondents and specified social groups is the *sine qua non* of qualitative interviewing”. These characteristics made interviews a crucial technique in this study, since it aimed at understanding the life worlds of beginning teachers.

Although the interview method is such an important technique, it is not without limitations. Gaskell (2000) identifies three main limitations of this method. Firstly, the interviewer may not always understand the local language. For instance, some of the connotations in the ordinary terms used may be different. Secondly, informants sometimes omit important details, which are taken for granted, but would be vital if communicated to the researcher. Thirdly, sometimes respondents view situations with distorted eyes and provide accounts that are misleading. To minimise such limitations in this study, I used an accumulation of insights from a set of interviews with the teachers. These limitations were further minimised by the triangulation of data-development methods that was employed in the study.

There are a variety of types and forms of qualitative interviews, such as structured and structure-free (unstructured) interviews (Mason, 2000), semi-structured interviews, standard and discussive/constructivist interviews (Henning van Rensburg & Smith, 2004) and in-depth (face-to-face) interviews (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). This study used semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility and fluidity in addressing the topics and areas that were being covered, and the way they were approached (Mason, 2000). The face-to-face nature of the interviews also facilitated follow-up of emerging issues throughout the study process.

The interviews were conducted with all the participants. Initially, a semi-structured face-to-face interview guide (see Appendix 4) was used to collect detailed information on the teachers' experiences, challenges and opportunities. Follow-up meetings were then arranged, depending on need and to follow up issues that emerged after coding and analysis of the initial interview. The interviews were recorded on an audio-tape recorder. This helped to retain exact information for data transcribing, data coding and data analysis, as well as for later reference.

- Classroom observations

Classroom observation was another important method used for developing data in this study. In their contribution to the second edition of *Handbook of qualitative research* Angrosine & Mays de Perez (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 673) contend that "observation is the fundamental base of all methods in the social sciences". Angrosine & Mays de Perez (2000) noted that even studies based on interviews alone employ some observation technique to make sense of body language and other gestures that lend meaning to the words of the person being interviewed.

Classroom observations were particularly important in this study because the classroom is for this study the natural locus of the issue under investigation (cf. Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). I observed the teaching of the teachers using a classroom observation schedule (Appendix 5). The aim of the classroom observation was primarily to capture the nature of the lessons and current practices of the beginning teachers, and then act as a guide for a follow-up interview immediately after the observation. However, classroom observation became a useful method in this study in two other ways. Firstly, it gave me more insight into issues raised in earlier interviews, so it was also used as a follow-up strategy. Secondly, it offered me the rare opportunity of being able to compare the teachers' analysis of their own lessons and my analysis as a teacher educator.

Observational studies in the literature have raised many ethical debates (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000; Mason, 2002). Many of these have centred on the issues of acceptability and reliability of covert (where the observer is concealed from subjects) and overt (where the observer is not concealed from subjects) observational studies. The issue of concern in this study could have been whether the lessons observed would represent a 'typical' lesson, as some lessons may be 'staged' by the teachers. However, this problem was not perceived as a threat to the findings as the purpose of the class observation was not to evaluate the lessons. All classroom observations were conducted as follow-up meetings. Furthermore, the value of lesson observations was focused more on the teachers' reflections on the lesson after the observation. Nonetheless, careful attention was placed on entry relationships and power dynamics to ensure that the teacher was not disturbed by my presence, and also that my presence did not disrupt classroom learning.

- *Reflective diary*

This study used reflection as another method of data development. The literature review in Chapter Two identified reflection as one of the important practices for professional development in teaching and beginning teaching. The teachers in the study were trained to keep a journal of their experiences in the form of a diary during the study period. Keeping a journal is important in teaching for professional development (Holly, 1991). The beginning teachers used this diary to reflect upon their classroom and professional experiences during follow-up meetings with me throughout the study period. These data served as further evidence of the teachers' experiences in their initial year of teaching and also complemented earlier data (see Appendix 6 for reflection guidelines and sample).

Diary reflection meetings were also used as an opportunity to follow-up on any issues that may have arisen from earlier interactions (during face-to-face interviews or class observation), and also to get validation on any emerging

issues. All meetings were audio-taped. Reflection meetings took place once every fortnight with each teacher.

- Focus Group discussions

When it was felt that theoretical saturation had been attained, no more interviews or classroom observations were conducted; instead I conducted two focus group discussions with the teachers. Theoretical saturation, according to Strauss & Corbin (1990), is a situation when subsequent interviews no longer add new information to the data. Focus group discussions were important at this final point, because they acted as wrap-up meetings and also gave me an opportunity to get validation on the major categories that I had been able to summarise at this time.

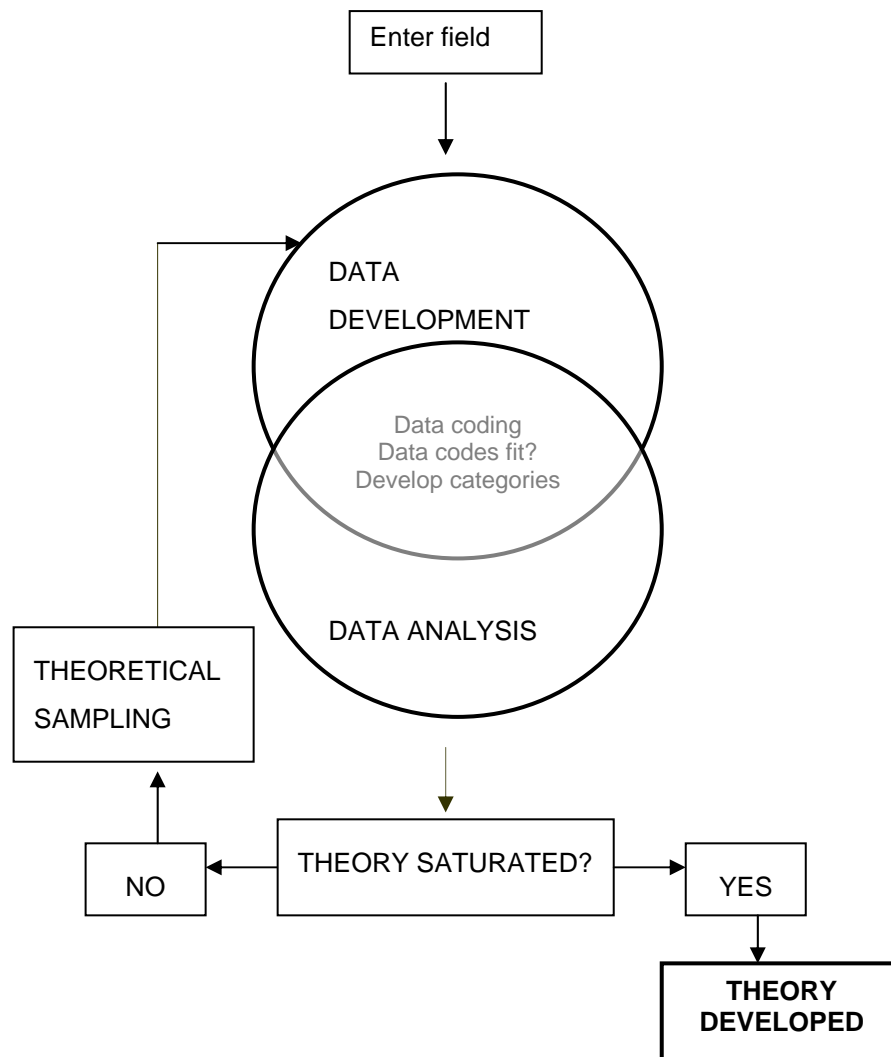
3.5.3 Data analysis

Grounded theorists differ in the techniques that they employ to generate grounded theory. Glaser (1978, 1992, 1998) emphasises the development of theoretical categories that serve as variables, assumes an indicator-concept approach, seeks context-free but modifiable theoretical statements, and aims for “the achievement of parsimony and scope in explanatory power” (Glaser, 1992:116). Strauss & Corbin (1998:15) emphasise relationships among concepts. For them theory means “a set of well developed concepts related through statements of relationship, which together constitute an integrated framework that can be used to explain or predict phenomena”. I used Charmaz’s (2006) critique of both Glaser’s and Strauss’s methods, and her contrast between positivist and constructivist grounded theory to guide my thinking as I selected techniques that would aid development of theory in this study. However, in general, the basic strategy was the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The constant comparative method, as discussed earlier, allows the researcher to code and analyse data and to generate theory systematically. Using this method, all qualitative data from the face-to-face interviews, reflective diaries, classroom observations and field notes were typed on file, read and then coded in order to organise the data in a manner that constituted “proof for a given proposition” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:102). During this analysis any new categories in the data were integrated into the theoretical notions of the study. Properties of the new category were then identified through further theoretical sampling. By using such explicit coding and analytical procedures, it was possible to create categories. These categories were systematically compared to establish their relationships. This eventually led into development of a framework and a theory that related to the experiences of the six beginning secondary school Home Economics teachers in the study (presented in Chapter Six).

Interpretation of the data was done by comparing the emergent theory with existing relevant literature. Studies with both similar and conflicting frameworks have been used in the interpretation in order to establish the domain to which the study findings can be generalised. This was useful to clearly establish and show the parameters/boundaries within which the generated theory is applicable. The data-analysis process is presented in detail in Chapter Five. Figure 3.1 is a summary of the research process in this study.

Figure 3.1: Summary of the research process



3.6 Confirmation of research results

Researchers want those who read their work to have confidence in their findings. The researchers themselves also want to have confidence in their data. Establishing this was guided by grounded theory procedures (such as the constant comparison method, theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation as indicated earlier). Furthermore, the rigour of the study findings were also enhanced through use of other procedures to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of results. The most commonly used measures of confirming the rigour and credibility of research findings have been validity and reliability. However, the relevance of using these measures in studies using qualitative methodology has been an issue of great debate amongst social scientists. These

criticisms were carefully considered in the design of this study and appropriate measures were adopted in order to avoid compromising the rigour and credibility of the study results.

3.6.1 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness of results

Validity is the degree to which research results are sound. It determines the strengths of the conclusions. Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which results are repeatable (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). Criteria for establishing the validity of qualitative findings are probably the most contentious issue, yet validity is a central factor in ensuring the dependability and credibility of results (Lather, 1986b, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). From a positivist point of view, validity calls for rigour in the application of methods. Qualitative researchers argue for interpretive rigour that provides “concrete constructions of human phenomena that can be trusted” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000:179). Qualitative researchers therefore often refer to the validity and the reliability of a study as trustworthiness.

In order to develop the trustworthiness of the results from this study, I used triangulation and participant validation. Triangulation refers to the use of multiple perspectives in a single study to check one’s own position (Durrheim, 1999). Several types of triangulation can be adopted such as data triangulation, investor triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation (Durrheim, 1999) and interdisciplinary triangulation (Janesick, 1994). In this study I used five different research methods with the six teachers, which constitutes methodological triangulation. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2000:5), triangulation of methods of data development is important, because it helps to add “rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry”.

In addition to triangulation, at various points during the data development

process I required the participants to confirm summary notes and emerging categories as they arose. At the end of the study I presented to the teachers the main categories identified and the preliminary diagram that summarised the findings for their comments during the Focus group discussions. This form of member checking is called validation. Validation helps to authenticate transcripts and ensures that the perspectives and experiences of participants are correctly and accurately presented (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Finally, I also employed the notion of reflexivity, as another approach for enhancing the validity in this study. Denzin & Lincoln (2000) define reflexivity as the process of reflecting critically on the self as “the researcher, the human as the instrument”. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 183), reflexivity enables researchers to come to terms with themselves and those they engage with in the research process as well as “the multiple identities that present the fluid self in the research setting”. Since each of these ‘selves’ comes into play in the research setting, reflexivity allows for a hierarchy of speaking positions by making visible the relationship between the ‘knower and the known’ and thereby addressing any problems of concealment (Adkins, 2000).

In supporting the role of reflexivity Lather (1986b:66) observed that, since in post-positivist paradigms following the correct methods does not necessarily guarantee validity, there is an increasing need for establishment of ways of minimising the distorting effect of personal bias upon the logic of evidence through use of research designs that push the researcher towards becoming “vigorously self-aware”. In a similar argument, Howe (1992) contends that interpretivism confined to only the “insider’s perspective” is consistent with the logic of the positivist paradigm. Howe (1992:242) dismisses this type of interpretivism on the grounds that:

... it fails to measure up to the strictness of verifications as positivists did, recent criticisms focus on the impossibility of completely shedding one’s skin, of “going native”, so as to be fully in tune with the insider’s

perspective, and on the inadequacies of this brand of interpretivism with respect to what social researchers adopt as their aim of the enterprise.

Through reflexivity it was possible to generate data that clearly portrayed experiences of the beginning teachers and my perspectives as a researcher. In this way it was also possible to document any inconsistencies and contradictions that arose during the research process. Such explicit location of voices further enhances the validity of the research findings.

3.6.2 Generalisability

Generalisability (sometimes also called external validity) refers to the extent to which study results can be applied to other contexts. Some social scientists claim that meanings are highly variable across contexts of human interactions and do not seek generalisable findings (Van der Riet & Durrheim 2006). Furthermore, they contend that the traditional view of generalisability limits the ability of the researcher to reconceptualise the role of social science in education and the humanities. They argue that it is the uniqueness of the experience or issue under study that makes it a valuable study area. Therefore, replicability of such findings is an irrelevant issue (Janesick, 1994).

On the other hand, however, interpretive researchers sometimes aim at explaining common and widely shared categories of human experience. They therefore seek for research findings that could be transferable. According to Van der Riet, & Durrheim (2006), transferability can be established by producing detailed and rich descriptions of contexts. These give detailed accounts of the structures of meaning that develop in a specific context. Transferability of results is a relevant criterion for this study. To ensure transferability, I have tried to live up to my responsibility to “provide the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 316) by providing detailed description of the teachers’ experiences at all stages of the

study and by explaining my positions and roles as a researcher throughout the research process.

Although generalisability is not the prime quality sought in this study, development of general categories or a framework for understanding the beginning teachers' experiences was a desirable outcome. Such a framework was perceived as useful for discussion with subsequent groups of Home Economics beginning teachers, for informing teacher development and teacher training, as well as for providing feedback to the teacher education programme in Malawi. The grounded theory methodology that has been used in this study has often been acclaimed for its potential to be able to move from individual or group in-depth study to general features of the wider context (Keith, 2000) because of the nature of the data development process and the analytical processes used. Therefore, in order to ensure this potential applicability of the results, strict adherence to methodological issues was maintained at all levels of the study process.

3.7 Roles of the researcher and their impact on the study

In conducting this study I adopted multiple roles. First I perceived myself as a teacher researcher. In adopting this definition, I concur with Lankshear & Knobel (2004), who disagree with the commonly agreed definition of teacher researchers as teachers researching their own classrooms with or without collaborative support. They contend that this is not the same concept as that of conducting research pertinent to one's own professional practice. They therefore argue that "(t)he crucial point is that the purpose or objects of teacher research must flow from the authentic (or felt) questions, issues and concerns of teachers themselves" (Lankashear & Knobel, 2004:8). This study was prompted by questions arising in my experience as a teacher and teacher educator in Home Economics for fifteen years. I perceive my experience as being important content and context that I brought into this study, which became an important basis for

theorising as I interacted with the beginning teachers.

Secondly, I perceived myself as a social researcher. My role as a researcher in this study was most critical especially during the data-development phase. In conducting the field work I entered the lives of beginning teachers who were once my students during their University teacher training years. This could have been a cause of conflict of roles and affected field-work relationships. The interplay of my multiple roles in this study had to be carefully observed. However, being someone who was already known to the participants proved advantageous. It relaxed the participants so that they could act normally, unlike if it were a total stranger observing them. Familiarity also enhanced my access to the schools and the classrooms.

My third role in this study was that of an observer. In describing the various roles that a social scientist may adopt as an observer during field work, Marshall & Rossman (1994:60) state:

The researcher may plan the role that entails varying degrees of 'participantness'- that is, the degree of actual participation in daily life. At one extreme is the full participant, who goes about ordinary life in a role or set of roles constructed in the setting. At the other extreme is the complex observer who engages not at all in social interaction and may even shun involvement in the world being studied. And, of course, all possible complementary mixes along the continuum are available to the researcher.

Adopting the role of a complete participant would have entailed that I participate in all the activities in the school, or those that my study participants were involved in. This role was perceived as problematic as it could have radically changed the social process that I was studying. For instance, people (participants as well as others in the school) were likely to modify their behaviours due to my presence. Secondly, it would also have been impossible for me to be an effective participant observer in all the six schools where the participants in my study were

teaching.

On the other extreme, the complete observer studies social phenomena without becoming a part of them in any way. Babbie (2004) argues that the danger of complete observation is that the observations may be very sketchy and transitory. However, this was not a threat in this study, because the design of the research provided for follow-up discussions after class, or during face-to-face interviews as discussed in the data-development methods section. Nevertheless, the success in adopting this role relied mostly on establishing a proper understanding with my participants, namely that I was entering their world as a social researcher and not as a college supervisor.

My position as a social researcher who is also a teacher and educator had many advantages in this study. In grounded theory methodology the researcher has to be theoretically sensitive in order to be able to conceptualise and formulate theory as it emerges from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In defining theoretical sensitivity, Strauss and Corbin (1990:42) state:

Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capacity to separate the pertinent from that which isn't. It is theoretical sensitivity that allows one to develop a theory that is grounded, conceptually dense and well integrated...

My experiences as an educator and a Home Economics teacher were a valuable source for insight. As I thought of the various emerging categories, my personal past experiences acted as a springboard to systematic theorising (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which was essential for comparing between and among categories, development of the final framework and the generation of the theory presented in Chapter Six.

Teacher socialisation research, the area of this study, has drawn criticism concerned with the ethical dimensions of the research process (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). Questions have been raised such as: *Whose perspectives are presented in the research? Who benefits from the research?* Furthermore, teachers, teacher educators and student teachers are often portrayed in a negative way in the studies. As a consequence of this, teacher research has often been said to be “research on” rather than “for” the people being studied (Zeichner & Gore, 1990:342). The nature of this study, my multiple roles and my position in the study break this tradition, because this study will be useful to the study participants, student teachers and myself as a teacher educator. Firstly, the process of reflection that the six teachers went through as part of the study gave them an opportunity to reflect, analyse, evaluate and re-think their own practices. This I consider as useful for professional development. Secondly, another way through which this dissertation will be used is to provide useful accounts of teacher socialisation that will be produced as part of Home Economics education courses. Student teachers who read and discuss these accounts are likely to gain insight into, and control over, their own socialisation. Finally, as a teacher educator myself, the lessons that I have learnt from conducting this study are valuable feedback that I will always reflect upon and use in the training of new Home Economics teachers for many years to come. I therefore consider this study to be *about* teachers, and *for* teachers.

3.8 Chapter summary

In this chapter I have provided a detailed discussion of the theoretical and philosophical perspectives that frame this dissertation study. I have described my dissertation as based on the interpretive paradigm and using grounded theory as the methodology; I have also described the method of data development and analytical framework. In the discussion I have attempted to highlight the characteristic of grounded theory as ‘an inductive process of theory development from data’ - because this was the fundamental basis for the choice of this interpretive methodology: to generate a pattern, framework or phenomenon that would advance understanding of the beginning teachers’ experiences in their

schools.

In the next chapter I begin to present the data that were produced from the five data-development methods that have been described in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Presentation of data

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the data that were generated through use of a questionnaire, face-to-face and reflection interviews, classroom observations, teachers' diaries and Focus group discussions of beginning Home Economics teachers in Malawi from 11th January to 30th May, 2006.

The six beginning teachers in this study are four males and two females. Three were teaching in schools in Zomba district, which is in the southern region of the country. Of the other three, two were teaching in schools in Lilongwe and one in Kasungu district, which are in the central region. These three districts are spaced over a distance of over 350 kilometres apart. Although the initial strategy was to use stratified sampling across the three regions of the country in order to get regional representation, sampling was not possible due to the small number of beginning Home Economics teachers that reported for teaching.

All interviews were conducted within the school setting. I met each teacher twice every month over the five-month period. During my time in the schools I also had informal meetings with the Heads of schools, Heads of departments and other teachers in the schools, which also provided valuable insight to issues in the study. At the end of the study period I held two focus group discussions with the teachers – one with the teachers in the south and the other with the teachers in the central region. During these focus group discussions my preliminary findings were presented and discussed with the teachers. This also served as a means of validation.

The grounded theory methodology used in this study is based on a research design in which theory is derived from data. Using this methodology, data analysis is an ongoing process which started during the field work and continued until saturation was reached, as was outlined in Chapter Three. In this chapter, I present the data that were developed during the field work. In the next chapter (Chapter Five) I present the data analysis and the interpretation of the results.

4.2 Method of data presentation

Glaser & Strauss (1967:228) note that the grounded theory researcher faces the problem of “how to describe the data of the social world studied so vividly that the reader, like the researcher can almost literally see and hear its people”. This problem is mostly due to the fact that qualitative data do not lend themselves to ready summaries. Glaser & Strauss (1967) therefore suggest the use of several strategies for presenting the data, including:

- Presentation of characteristic illustrations;
- Use of accompanying crude tables;
- Quoting directly from interviews or conversations;
- Inclusion of dramatic segments of on-the-spot field notes;
- Constructing readable case studies;
- Use of a codified procedure that was used for analysing data.

These different strategies are used in this chapter (with the exception of case studies) to present the data. Direct interview quotations are used in the next chapter.

I have presented the data in four sections. In the first section I introduce the teachers and their schools; in the second section, I present sample data from interviews, classroom observations and teachers' diaries. In the third section I present data from the two focus group discussions that were conducted, and in the fourth section I present data from across the six schools using the twenty-two

categories which were generated using the codified procedure that was used for analysing data during field work.

4.3 Introduction to the teachers and their schools

The six teachers in this study had all graduated with a Bachelors degree in Education in 2005 with Home Economics as one of their teaching subjects. The Bachelors degree programme at the University of Malawi is a four-year full-time programme, followed by twelve weeks of a closely supervised (by Faculty of Education staff) school-based teaching practice. The education degree programme in Malawi is an integrated model of teacher training, where subject matter and the pedagogical subjects (Curriculum and Teaching Studies, and Educational Foundations) are distributed throughout the course from second year to fourth year. Five of the teachers had Home Economics as their major teaching subject. Only one had studied Home Economics as his minor teaching subject. However, in the schools where they taught, they were all equally recognised as Home Economics teachers.

The teachers in this study, given the pseudonyms Andy, Berth, Cathy, Dan, Eddy and Frank here, were aged between 24 and 28 years. Table 4.1 shows some of the main biographical characteristics and teaching subjects of the teachers.

Table 4.1 Biographical characteristics and teaching subjects of the teachers

Name	Age	Sex	Marital status	Major teaching subject	Minor teaching subject
Andy	28	M	Single	Home Economics	Theology and Religious Studies (TRS)
Berth	24	F	Single	Home Economics	English
Cathy	25	F	Married	Home Economics	Geography
Dan	24	M	Single	Home Economics	Demography
Eddy	25	M	Single	Geography	Home Economics
Frank	24	M	Single	Home Economics	Mathematics

All six teachers were teaching in government schools. The schools had some slight differences. Dan's school, although run by the government, was privately owned by a board of trustees, whose interest was in the provision of social and education facilities to orphan children. However, the school is open to both orphaned (residential) students and day students from the surrounding communities. Andy's school was the only one in the sample that ran as a complete day secondary school. All the others had both boarding and day students. All the schools in the study were co-educational and all the Home Economics classes observed had both boys and girls taking the subject.

At the start of this study the teachers were in their fourth month of teaching, having been posted into schools in September 2005. The data were therefore developed between their fourth and ninth months of teaching. However, reflections on their first three months were also included in discussions of their socialisation during the first face-to-face interviews and early follow-up reflection meetings.

4.4 Interviews, classroom observations and teachers' diaries

The field work data-development process involved 12 classroom observations, 45 interviews, 6 journal writing training meetings (each teacher developed a journal/diary), and two focus group meetings with the teachers (one in each of the two regions). All meetings were scheduled around the teachers' schedules to avoid disrupting their busy teaching programmes. I met each teacher twice every month, except in April, when the schools closed for a school break for three weeks. Table 4.2 is a summary of the school visit schedule.

Table 4.2: School visit schedule.

	Andy	Berth	Cathy	Dan	Eddy	Frank
Jan	11 th : Permission to conduct study granted by Ministry of Education. 11 th – 20 th Phone contacts with all teachers (making appointments)					
	19 th Consent form Journal writing training 1 st Interview	17 th Consent form Journal writing training 20 th 1 st Interview	18 th Consent form Journal writing training 20 th 1 st Interview	23 rd : Consent form Journal writing training 1 st Interview	24 th Consent form Journal writing training 1 st Interview	23 rd Consent form Journal writing training 25 th 1 st Interview
Feb	3 rd Reflection/interview 24 th Biographic details Questionnaire	1 st Reflection/interview 27 th Class observation Biographic details Questionnaire	3 rd Class observation Reflection/interview 24 th Biographic details Questionnaire Reflection/interview	6 th Reflection/interview 13 th Biographic details Questionnaire Class observation	7 th Class observation Reflection/interview 16 th Biographic details Questionnaire Reflection/interview	8 th Class observation Reflection/interview 17 th Biographic details Questionnaire Reflection/interview
	9 th Class observation Reflection/interview 14 th Class observation Reflection/interview	13 th Reflection/interview 15 th Class observation Reflection/interview	13 th Reflection/interview 17 th Reflection/interview	22 nd Reflection/interview 29 th Reflection/interview	21 st Class observation Reflection/interview 30 th Reflection/interview	22 nd Class observation Reflection/interview 29 th Reflection/interview
April	3 rd Reflection/interview	3 rd Reflection/interview	10 th Reflection/interview	5 th Reflection/interview	6 th Reflection/interview	7 th Reflection/interview
May	17 th Reflection/interview	16 th Reflection/interview	19 th Reflection/interview Class observation	12 th Reflection/interview	9 th Reflection/interview Class observation	11 th Reflection/interview
	Southern region workshop: 27 th May			Central region workshop: 30 th May		

4.4.1: Interviews

I conducted face-to-face interviews with each of the beginning teachers separately throughout the field work period. Figure 4.1 is an excerpt from transcribed data from a reflection interview.

Figure 4.1 Interview excerpt

Teacher identity: Dan.

Date of interview: 22/03/06

Tell me about the night school, because it is my first time to hear of a night school offering Home Economics

It's mostly composed of women. Around here, none of the schools offering night school offers H/E. So these students requested H/E from the night school head. We have a special head for the night school, but he still reports to the school head. When Mrs X was planning to leave, she advised me to take over the class and so I did.

Challenges

My most challenging experience has been the night school. When I walked into the classroom, the women did not think I was going to be their teacher. I went in, told them that Mrs X would be going away and I was taking over the class. Then I saw it in their eyes. Everyone was quiet, and I said "What's the problem?" It's then that one by one they raised their hands and I asked me questions. What do you know about H/E? I realised I had to make them trust me, gain their confidence, because it's what would make them continue coming to class. So I told them I am a H/E teacher in the school and I graduated with a teaching degree majoring in H/E. The women needed to be convinced.

What was their problem, you being a male?

Yes, they always associated H/E with women. But also my age. So you know, they thought I knew nothing.

How did you go around the problem?

When the lesson started, I needed to know what they knew and had covered. They were on meals for different people, so I asked them: Who is a sedentary worker? No hands up. So I changed to manual worker and this lady said, just a try, but it was not very accurate too. So I kind of opened up myself and started to relate the topic to energy needs of people to their physical activities. Just then I noticed a lot of questions. I had a good lesson in the end. In fact, although I was not sure of whether I was capable of taking the night school, I was full of confidence when I was walking out. Imagine some students even followed me to the staffroom with more questions.

Low/high points/challenges from night school

I felt sad that the women still need reorientation on the holistic nature of the subject. Also that the students' perception were influenced by my looks, age and that I am a male teacher.

Perceptions of own strengths

I do realise that H/E needs critical thinking and not taking it as just women's work. I am able to explain the theory well and in full, which makes the students understand the concepts better. Frequent exercises with the class improves performance of both teacher and students. Most of the teachers are not doing this, but it has helped a lot in my teaching. Also, before taking over the night school, I probed on the strengths of the last teacher. I was then able to capitalise on my own strengths and it helped me to gain the students' confidence - the previous teacher mothered the students, but was never free to open the students for questions if they misunderstood. I feel I have achieved this.

The excerpt in Figure 4.1 illustrates what an interview transcript looked like. Although transcripts were transcribed verbatim, some sections of the questions that I asked were not always presented verbatim, but the main issue indicated as a sub-theme or subsection. This was done to reduce lengthy transcriptions. It was also useful to assist in data analysis.

The excerpt also shows how interviews proceeded during field work. In this interview I first read the teacher's diary to capture his main experiences in the past two weeks. I then identified issues and raised probing questions to allow the teacher to explain and expand on the issues which were written in the diary. This approach also enabled the teachers to further elaborate on their experiences. A similar trend was used when following up on issues from earlier meetings.

4.4.2: Classroom/lesson observations

Table 4.3 shows the list of classes, subjects and class sizes that were taught by each of the beginning teachers. The list for each teacher does not represent the teaching load at a specific time, because the teaching load for all the teachers was not fixed during the study period. Teaching load changed during an end of semester break. Several changes also occurred within the semester. Table 4.3 gives an overview of all the classes taught by each teacher during the first nine months of their career (up to the end of this study).

Table 4.3 Classes/ subjects/ class size for each teacher

Name of teacher	Classes taught	Subject	Class size
Andy	Form 1	Home Economics	30
	Form 2	Home Economics	32
	Form 3	Agriculture	40
	Form 4	Home Economics	10
Berth	Form 1	Home Economics	54
	Form 3	Home Economics	60
	Form 4	Home Economics	60
Cathy	Form 1	Home Economics	39
	Form 1	Agriculture	93
	Form 3	Geography	105
	Form 3	Home Economics	40

	Form 4	Geography	105
Dan	Form 1	Home Economics	18
	Form 2	Mathematics	40
	Form 2	Biology	40
	Form 2	Home Economics	40
	Form 3	Biology	38
	Form 3	Home Economics	18
	Form 4 (night school)	Home Economics	20
Eddy	Form 1	Home Economics	23
	Form 1	Geography	40
	Form 2	Home Economics	30
	Form 3	Geography	40
	Form 3	Home Economics	28
	Form 4	Home Economics	35
Frank	Form 1	Home Economics	64
	Form 1	Mathematics	60+
	Form 2	Home Economics	60+
	Form 3	Home Economics	60+ ¹

Figure 4.2 is a sample of a classroom observation schedule report from one of the lessons observed during the study. The classroom observation report was formatted as described in Chapter Three (Appendix 4). All class observation reports had two sections: Part A and Part B. Part A of the lesson observation documented the actual lesson proceedings. In this section I attempted to capture the main descriptors of the lesson. Part B was a report from the follow-up reflection meeting between me and the teacher, which was recorded after the lesson and later transcribed and coded. In this interview I wrote about both the teacher's reflection on the lesson presented and my own description and reflections of the characteristics of the lesson.

Figure 4.2 Classroom observation schedule report

Teacher Identity: Frank	
Date and time of lesson: 8th February, 2006: 730-810 a.m.	
PART A	
Class	Form 1
Size of class	Boys- 26 Girls- 42 Total 64
Topic	Principles of Nutrition
Main Concepts of the Lesson	Malnutrition ▪ Over-nutrition

¹ Fluctuating class sizes: Teacher was unable to state exact numbers he had in class

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Under-nutrition
Objectives of the lesson	<p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Define malnutrition ▪ State the two main forms of malnutrition ▪ Describe the two forms of malnutrition
Introductory activities	Teacher linked lesson with the previous one
Development of lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher introduced concepts of nutrition and malnutrition by first asking a few students to define the terms ▪ Teacher explained the terms and causes of obesity, anorexia nervosa and starvation, wrote definitions/ terms on chalkboard ▪ Students responded to teacher questions and wrote notes
Concluding activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher wrote a class exercise on the chalk board and went round marking the exercise until the bell rang ▪ Teacher announced to the class that they would be having an extra lesson in the evening in order to catch up with the other form one class.

Part B: Reflection

Any successful experiences from the lesson?

Teacher felt he had been able to clarify the main concepts of the lesson, and confident that students understood the distinctions

Problems in the lesson

Teacher was not particularly happy with the overall lesson, although he could not point out why. This is the class that he finds has a lot of fast learners, but the participation on the day was low.

Planning

No lesson plan was developed. Lesson mostly based on syllabus outline, schemes of work notes and one reference book;

Because of lack of reference materials the teacher felt he was unable to expound on some issues/points beyond the syllabus guides, and as a result could not be able to plan for other suitable teaching and learning experiences for the class, nor give more relevant examples in the lesson;

No charts available in the school for visual aids, unless one uses own resources;

Teacher felt he needed to have planned for more work. Also expressed lack of time for planning, because he is also Chairman of the school sanitation committee, which takes up most of his time.

Influences on methods of teaching used

Lesson was adapted to shortage of resources and class size

Support received

None in this lesson because it was not sought. Otherwise, when contacted, other colleagues do provide support. For example, because he was not familiar with some concepts on textiles and design, a colleague taught those sections for him.

In addition to the reflection notes, I also took note of other characteristics of the lessons which I observed. During the class observation presented here I took note of the classroom environment as outlined in this summary:

- An overcrowded class of 64 students taught by a male teacher
- Whole class teaching - no group or pair work used.
- Generally class had limited participation dominated by teacher, although questioning was used to ensure that
 - Students contribute own experiences
 - Check students' understanding of concepts
- Most of the girls were sitting in the front row
- No traditional forms of opening and closing windows before and after lesson,
- Lack of teaching resources was very evident:
 - No duster, the teacher was using a rug to rub off the chalk board
 - Not enough desks: some students writing with notebooks placed on their laps
 - Students have to move with their chairs from the Home Economics lab to their classrooms
 - Two broken water taps running continuously as the lesson was in progress (not in line with the Home Economics teaching of resource management – water is a valuable resource that needs to be conserved)
- In the next room a lot of broken items/out of use equipment was visible.

To further clarify the image of the classrooms that I observed, Figures 4.3a and 4.3b are pictures of two Home Economics classrooms which were observed during the study.

Figure 4.3a: Picture of a Home Economics class



Figure 4.3b: Picture of a Home Economics class



Apart from teaching, the teachers also played several other roles and had other responsibilities in the schools. Below is a summary of the list of the roles that the six teachers played at various times in their first nine months of teaching.

- Class teacher (form teacher)
- Member of entertainment committee
- Patron for the Students' Christian Organisation of Malawi (SCOM)
- Library committee member
- Head of summer school
- Acting head of department
- Head of department
- Chair of school sanitation committee
- Sports master/mistress
- Patron for the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Students' Organisation (CCAPSO)
- Disciplinary committee member
- School counsellor
- Role model for students
- Staff secretary
- Mentor for student teacher

4.4.3 *Teacher diaries*

At the start of this study I trained the teachers to keep a journal on their teaching in the form of a diary. During the five months six diaries/journals were developed. As outlined in Chapter Three, the diaries were used by the teachers to aid in reflection on their own practice during my school visit. Appendix 6 is a page from one teacher's journal.

4.5 **Focus group discussions**

On 27th and 30th May I conducted joint meetings in the form of focus group discussions. These meetings were not originally planned for, but I found it necessary to hold the two joint meetings in order to present to the teachers the main categories that were developed during the study for their validation. I also felt it necessary to hold the group meetings in response to the teachers' desire to share their experiences and compare notes with other beginning teachers (former classmates in college), which provided another opportunity for me to hear the issues related to this study being collectively discussed by the teachers.

At both focus group meetings the teachers confirmed that the categories represented their experiences. In addition to this validation, this focus group discussion meeting served as a summary of the data-development process. At the meeting I asked each teacher to respond to two questions as a summary of their professional experiences in the initial nine months of teaching:

1. What can you say was your highest point in the past nine months?
2. What can you say was your lowest point in the past nine months?

Table 4.4 is a summary of the teachers' responses to these questions.

Table 4.4: FGD summary question responses

Question	Response
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When teaching concepts most familiar with - e.g. nutrition (Andy) ▪ When I gained students' respect and confidence (Berth) ▪ Having a positive relationship with students (Berth) ▪ Am happy with the school social atmosphere, with school house, and have supportive colleagues (Cathy) ▪ Winning confidence of night school <i>women</i> (students) (Dan) ▪ Representing school at the district sports event (Eddy) ▪ Positive progress with chairing sanitation committee - although very demanding (Frank)
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When teaching concepts least familiar and uncomfortable with - e.g. textiles, child care (Andy) ▪ Unsupportive colleagues and administration (Berth) ▪ When she gave false information to students (Cathy) ▪ Had a misunderstanding with a colleague (Cathy) ▪ Dealing with problem student (deviant) in class (Dan) ▪ Witchcraft scare in the school (Eddy) ▪ Gender issue with female student (Frank)

4.6 Codes and categories across the six teachers

After saturation was reached, a total of twenty-two categories were generated from the field analysis of interviews, classroom observations and diary reflections. Table 4.5 is a summary of the codes and categories across the six teachers. The process that was used to generate these codes from the data is explained in detail in the next chapter.

Table 4.5 Codes and categories across the six teachers

Category	Andy's codes	Berth's codes	Cathy's codes	Dan's codes	Eddy's codes	Frank's codes
Familiarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Smooth transition from TP o Familiarity o Same TP school 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Same TP school 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o social insecurity o KA a familiar district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Familiar class easy to handle o Same TP school
High expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Treated as fellow teacher o Similar teacher expectations o Pressures to improve examination results in H/E o High expectations perceived o Perceived capable in Agriculture o 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o High expectations from colleagues o Higher workload o Experience vs academic qualifications o CHANCO degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Expected to teach other sciences o Expected to improve exam performance o Treated as fellow teacher o Teaching senior classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o High workload o Flexibility increasing load o High expectations-counselling students o CHANCO degree o Treated as fellow teacher o Teaching examination classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o CHANCO degree o Expected improve student's exam performance o Teaching examination classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Perceiving high expectations from other teachers o TP mentorship demands o Acts as Deputy head when DHM is away o Given more responsibility than senior teachers o expected to bring new ideas
High work load	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Teaching senior classes o Teaching forms 1 to 4 (high load) o Teaching add: Agriculture o Inadequate class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Teaching forms 1, 3 and 4 o Teaching senior classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Teaching additional subject: Agriculture o Higher work load o Teaching forms 1, 3 and 4 o Teaching senior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o High workload o Overburdened with other roles o Teaching additional subjects: Maths, Biology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Teaching form 1-4 H/E o Taking over other teacher's workload o Experiencing high teaching load 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Perceiving the HM's high expectations o Openly praised by HM o Overload/role conflict

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ preparation due to overload ○ Inability to satisfy work demands 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ classes 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High expectations from Deputy H. ○ Elected Head of Science section
Lack of feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No feedback ○ Uncertain of performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Limited of feedback ○ Feedback limited to students ○ Limited colleague interaction ○ Work is individualistic ○ Negative feedback from colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Receiving negative feedback from colleagues ○ Positive feedback from colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Limited feedback ○ Feedback from students only ○ Unfair supervisory feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ no feedback received ○ Receiving only students' feedback ○ No handover from mentor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No feedback on teaching ○ Feedback limited to administrative roles
Limited/no Professional development activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ INSET 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Limited professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ INSET ○ Limited professional opportunities ○ On job lessons ○ Desire for development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ INSET ○ Not much professional development acts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No professional development activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No professional development activities
Stepping stone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stepping stone ○ Low salary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stepping stone ○ No job motivation ○ Not satisfied with work ○ Low salary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stepping stone ○ Low salary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stepping stone ○ Low salary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stepping stone ○ Salary is too low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stepping stone ○ Low salary

School induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No induction received ○ Luck of TORs to guide work expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No induction received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No induction received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No induction received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No induction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No induction
Teacher shortage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of HE mentor ○ Lack of mentor causing lack of confidence ○ Lack of mentor causing lack of feedback ○ Additional subject: <i>Agriculture</i> ○ High workload ○ No HE support ○ High Teachers turn over-challenge examining another's class ○ Teacher TO Examining unfamiliar students ○ Challenges of constant change of classes ○ Lack of guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher shortage ○ High expectations from colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Additional subject: <i>Agriculture</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Job insecurity in school climate ○ Disturbed by high teacher turnover ○ Constant time-table changes ○ Additional subject Biology ○ Being compared to experienced teacher ○ Experiencing pressures of constant teacher turnover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teacher shortage in HE ○ Mentor retires ○ Only H/E teacher ○ Lacking guidance 	

School roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form 4 class teacher Member of entertainment committee Patron SCOM Library committee member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was Head of summer school Acted as HOD languages Form 1 W class teacher Patron for CCAPSO Sports mistress Mentor to TP student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form 4 Form teacher Patron SCOM Disciplinary committee member School counsellor Role model for girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports master Staff secretary Role model to students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sports master Role model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form teacher School counsellor Mentor to TP student Chair of sanitation committee Experiencing demands of responsibility Acts as Deputy Head
Class/ student management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing rules and regulations Punishment Dealing with noisy class Under planning evident Quick fix - exclusion from class Adapting to school culture on punishments Problems with managing practical lesson (9 students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convincing students with facts Adopting a calm attitude Making a difference in student learning Quick fix mechanisms Using participatory teaching methods Dealing with a large class size Dealing with fluctuating class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Experiencing large class size (130 Geography) Exercising class control Quick fix Using physical punishment Strong student control mechanisms Dealing with unruly classes Strong class control measures Emphasising student discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercising class control Dealing with individual differences Dealing with class discipline Dealing with school/class regulations (Effective use of) Participatory methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty controlling students Large class size for H/E lab Fluctuating class size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discovering students' learning difficulties Dealing with large class size Disappointed with class performance Student/class management

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> size ○ Need to control class size ○ Negative impacts of large classes ○ Difficulties to increase class participation 				
Subject specific challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High subject demands (MSCE) ○ Lacking references ○ Exam nature of curriculum ○ Personal knowledge as source of teaching ○ Lacking adequate content knowledge ○ Problems with extrapolating syllabus document ○ Unfamiliar content in syllabus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Difficulty in accessing info for certain topics ○ High practical demands of subject-problematic ○ Theory vs. practical teacher training ○ Experiencing limited content knowledge ○ H/E options ○ H/E stereotypes ○ H/E needs more hands on work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Confident about one's knowledge of Nutrition ○ Reservations on practical skills ○ need for prior practice before teaching ○ H/E a demanding subject- time and practice ○ Discovered own subject potentials ○ Problems with MSCE content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Knowledge gap in textiles ○ Reading more in knowledge gaps ○ Unfamiliar content in syllabus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Negative subject stereotypes ○ H/E is elective, good students opt for computer. ○ Problems with H/E options ○ Problematic subject options ○ Limited planning ○ Misconceptions/stereotypes of students ○ Learning new things on the job ○ Problem extrapolating syllabus documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Problems with textiles and design ○ Dealing with Home Economics stereotypes ○ H/E options

Examination demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exam-oriented nature of curriculum ○ Exams mostly based on past exam papers ○ Past exams as key for planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Demands of an exam-oriented curriculum ○ Exams mostly based on past exam papers ○ Past exams as key for planning ○ Challenges of teaching an exam class ○ Affected by students poor performance ○ Reference to MANEB as standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Past exams as key for planning ○ Challenges of teaching an exam class ○ Affected by students poor performance ○ Reference to MANEB as standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Using past examination papers as guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reference to MANEB as standard ○ Worried about H/E exam procedures ○ Use of past papers as guide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use of past papers for exams
Lack of/limited teaching/ learning resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of Malawi references ○ Lack of reference material ○ More refs in nutrition ○ No/limited references in textiles ○ Less HE practical work done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Difficult to access H/E MSCE information/references ○ Lack of money to do practical lessons ○ Less HE practical work done ○ No/limited references in textiles, nutrition, entrepreneurship, consumerism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Limited teaching resources ○ Less HE practical work done ○ Lack of relevant references for H/E 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Difficult to access reference materials ○ Limited references for textiles, entrepreneurship skills, consumerism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ low school funding for practical work ○ Lacking references ○ Lacking references for Malawi ○ Difficulty finding MSCE ref material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poor department funding ○ Poor department facilities ○ Limited/lack of teaching resources - reference books ○ Limited resources for practical lessons
Age		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Young member 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Experiencing age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Being referred to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Age/experience

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Age/contradictions ○ Feeling exploited ○ Overload/age ○ Differential treatment ○ Limited autonomy ○ Age/workload conflicts ○ Students age gender conflict ○ BT flexibility 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ limitations ○ Flexibility ○ Underrated by students ○ Age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ as <i>ana</i> [children] ○ Age 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ conflict
Lack of/limited support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No support in H/E ○ Agriculture support on request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No support ○ limited support ○ Unsupportive colleagues ○ Lacking administrative support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support provided on request ○ Happy with support received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support provided on request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support limited to consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Limited support ○ Valuing high teacher support (H/E)
Gender issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Male BT not trusted with girls ○ HE for females ○ HE easier option ○ Gender and H/E concepts ○ Male teacher in H/E 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Age/gender conflict with students ○ Problems with boys in H/E 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Male teacher in H/E ○ Gender stereotypes ○ Misconceptions ○ Gender issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Male H/E teacher a surprise ○ Misconceptions/being underrated by female students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Male BT in H/E ○ Gender-need for social distance ○ Gender dilemma ○ Dealing with students' subject stereotypes
Limited colleague	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No trust from colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interaction with colleagues valued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive colleague interaction ○ Interaction with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Positive colleague interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individualistic planning ○ Poor interpersonal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Noting importance of colleague interaction

interaction		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individualistic planning ○ Valuable colleague support ○ Poor colleague interaction (unsupportive) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ colleagues valued ○ Individualistic planning 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> relationships ○ Colleagues lack trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Valuing advice from colleagues
Knowledge gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ College theory inadequate for sec school teaching ○ Practical skills for H/E teaching ○ Gaps in textiles, consumerism, entrepreneurship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Blaming college training for lack of practical experience ○ College theory inadequate for sec school teaching ○ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of practical experience in methodology training ○ Sec school background in subject ○ Gaps - textiles, consumerism, entrepreneurship ○ Textiles knowledge limited from college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Blaming college training for lack of practical experience ○ College theory inadequate for sec school teaching ○ Gaps in textiles, consumerism, entrepreneurship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gaps in textiles, consumerism, entrepreneurship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gaps in textiles, consumerism, entrepreneurship ○ Familiarity with syllabus
Personal factors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sense of nervousness in early teaching 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Affected by poor students' performance ○ Poor performance affecting teaching pace 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commands respect ○ Not much interaction with students
School experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ College experiences/ ○ College knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflection on TP ○ School experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflection on TP ○ School experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reference to school experience ○ College training ○ Importance of TP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reference to school experience 	
School		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Very happy with 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Worried over

administrative support mechanisms		from administration on subject options ○ Worried about admin disruption of classes	admin support (house)			admin disruption of classes ○ Supportive administration ○
Coping strategies	○ Extra reading ○ Personal knowledge ○ Discovering students' learning problems ○ Concerned about students' performance ○ Salary only hiccup in teaching ○ Feeling self confident ○ Feeling capable	○ Making a difference in students' learning ○ Personal knowledge ○ Confident about impact of own teaching skills ○ Abiding by own decisions (Sticking to decisions) ○ Making own decisions about work ○ Teaching in participatory manner	○ Extra reading ○ Good personal skills ○ Making a difference in students' learning ○ Personal knowledge ○ Confident about own teaching skills ○ Confident about student management and control ○ Happy with teaching as a carer	○ Making a difference in students' learning ○ Recalling school experience ○ Making a difference after being underrated ○ Extra reading ○ Confident with own content knowledge ○ Confident about progress of own learning ○ Optimistic about a good teaching career ○ Introducing change ○ Gained student confidence of night school women	○ Making a difference in students' learning ○ Strong content knowledge ○ Personal knowledge ○ Confident about own teaching skills ○ Positive feedback from students	○ Making a difference ○ Personality ○ Good class management skills ○ Content knowledge ○ Appreciating lessons learnt on the job ○ Doing more research to convince others ○ Gained student confidence ○ Making a difference in students' life ○ Refusing to just adapt

4.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter I introduced and described the six teachers on which this study is based. I have also presented the data that were generated through interviews, classroom observations, teachers' diaries and the wrap-up Focus group discussions. In the next chapter I present the analytical procedure that was used in the inductive process to generate the substantive-level theory from the twenty-two categories presented in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Data analysis and interpretation

5.2 Introduction

Creswell (1998:57) described any study based on grounded theory as a “zigzag process – out to the field to gather information, analyse the data, back to the field to gather more information, analyze the data, and so forth”. This study proceeded in a similar manner as described by the cyclic process in Chapter Three (Figure 3.1). I have therefore divided the discussion of the analysis into two sections of early data analysis, representing data analysis done during field work; and post-data-development data analysis, for analysis after the field work.

In the second part of this chapter I provide an interpretation of the analysis. In this section I have used the data from the initial face-to-face interviews, reflection interviews from both classroom observations and reflection meetings, data from the teachers’ diary entries and data from focus group discussions. These represent different slices of data in each of the six main categories which summarise the results of this study.

5.2 Early data analysis

Glaser & Strauss (1967) argue persuasively that theory should be inductively generated through the systematic analysis of empirical data. In their view, the key to successful theory generation is the use of the constant comparative method. The constant comparative method was the method used throughout this study. The first phases of data analysis occurred during data development: after each classroom observation and/or interview, I would transcribe and analyse the data before returning to the teacher for the next

round of classroom observations and/or interviews. During this phase the twenty-two categories presented in Chapter Four were developed. This section describes how these categories were generated.

5.2.1 Development of codes and categories

Development of codes and categories proceeded in line with grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As I read through the transcribed data, I summarised short sections with descriptive codes (open coding). Glaser (1992) describes open coding as the initial step of theoretical analysis that pertains to the initial discovery of categories and properties. The aim of open coding is “to produce concepts that seem to fit the data” (Strauss, 1987: 29). These concepts are provisional and only aimed at opening up the enquiry so that they get the researcher away from “too literal an immersion in materials (documents, field notes, interviews, etc.) and quickly get them into thinking in terms of explicit concepts and their relationships” (Strauss, 1987). I used both *in vivo* codes (that is, the words used by the participants) and *in vitro* codes (expressions introduced by the researcher) in this analysis.

Coding can be done on several levels: line-by-line analysis, sentence/paragraph analysis or whole document analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In general, my unit of analysis consisted of several sentences within a transcript. The codes were handwritten in the margins of the transcripts and field notes. As I progressed through the data, I used the constant comparative method of analysis. I followed Glaser & Strauss’s (1967:106) defining rule for the constant comparative method – “while coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category.”

After open coding, the next step was to begin axial coding. The purpose of axial coding is to begin the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:124). In axial coding dimensions and properties are developed for each category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The codes were compared for any similarities, differences and/or general patterns emerging in the data. In some cases I found that open and axial coding occurred simultaneously (cf. Glaser, 1992). I therefore began to develop the dimensions of the categories and generated a list of interview questions for the next round of data collection. This second stage of coding was used to come up with what I called level-1 categories. During this process, some codes, which were deemed similar, were combined as one category, other codes were renamed (for clarity) and for others, the same code became the category. Table 4.1 is a partial audit trail showing codes derived from a face-to-face interview transcript and how these level-1 categories were developed.

Table 5.1: Partial audit trail of initial face-to-face interview

Teacher identity: Andy (male teacher)
School: School 1: Coeducational; day secondary school
Date of interview: 19th January, 2006

Data	Code	Level-1 Categories
<p><i>Socialisation into the school system</i></p> <p>The school system is not new because teaching practice was done at the same school. The transition from practice teaching to beginning teaching almost happened immediately (<i>TP ended on 24th June, beginning teaching started September</i>). This hasn't been a new environment to me since I was already here.</p> <p>The Head and colleagues treat me as a fellow teacher who is experienced and I have seen that they also expect some things from me just as they expect from a teacher who has been here for some time. There is no difference.</p> <p>The workload, as you can see from the list is the same as any teacher. As a beginning teacher as you can see, am teaching Forms 3 and 4. I thought as a beginning teacher I would be given Form 1s and Form 2s. This makes me feel that my colleagues expect a lot from me.</p> <p><i>Were there no experienced teachers to take up the senior classes?</i></p> <p>For Home Economics, there was no experienced Home Economics teacher. But for Agriculture, there was an agriculture teacher for almost over five years, who is teaching Forms 2 and 4. I am teaching Form 3; I should have been teaching Form 1 as well, but I feel the workload is too much and there is now no Agriculture in Form 1.</p> <p><i>Feedback received</i></p> <p>Since it's the beginning, not yet. I have received no feedback of any type from my head or colleagues concerning my work and I don't know whether that means all is fine or not, because people tend to be silent when its negative feedback.</p> <p><i>Initial experiences/ satisfactions dissatisfactions/ challenges/ problems</i></p> <p>I never expected to go to a place where I would find there is nobody to guide me. But having come here and finding there is no one to say this is how we teach and this is where we get information, for your information, HE at senior level is very challenging, especially when you think of references. Its not that you go to a particular book and you find all the information from that book, like in other subjects. For HE you have to search in different books, and if you are lazy... the end result is disastrous. For your information, the results have just come out, and it's pathetic to see that in the Science Dept HE is the lowest in terms of performance. The highest for HE is I think a 7 for the internal students. It is the same pass rate but the quality of passing...</p>	<p>Familiarity</p> <p>Treated as fellow teacher</p> <p>Similar teacher expectations</p> <p>Teaching senior classes</p> <p>High expectations perceived</p> <p>Lack of H/E mentor</p> <p>Additional subject: Agriculture</p> <p>High work load</p> <p>No feedback</p> <p>Uncertain of performance</p> <p>Lack of guidance</p> <p>High subject demands (MSCE)</p> <p>Lacking reference material</p>	<p>Familiarity</p> <p>High expectations</p> <p>Teacher shortage</p> <p>High workload</p> <p>Lack of feedback</p> <p>Subject matter challenges</p>

The process of coding data and then comparing the codes for similarities and differences (the method of constant comparison), to come up with categories, continued throughout the field work until saturation was reached (no new categories being formulated). The next stage was to start making sense of the *maze of data* that had been created. This was probably the most critical stage of the analysis, as it required my personal sensitivity and a comprehensive analysis of the categories in order to make sense of the large volume of data that had been generated.

The main task at this stage was to sort out the categories that had been created. This was achieved by analysing the properties of each of the categories developed. Properties are attributes or characteristics of categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). By going through this painstaking process of analysing the properties of each category, I was able to have a clear understanding of each category. This analysis opened up new insights into the links between some of the categories and resulted in combinations of some categories. This process reduced the list of categories to the twenty-two which were now labelled as level-2 categories.

Table 5.1: Level-2 categories

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher shortage ▪ Limited/no professional development activities ▪ Lack of feedback ▪ No school induction ▪ Lack of/ limited teaching/ learning resources ▪ Limited colleague interaction ▪ High school expectations ▪ High work loads ▪ School roles ▪ Lack of/ limited support ▪ Familiarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal factors ▪ Gender issues ▪ Age ▪ Subject specific challenges ▪ Examination demands ▪ Knowledge gaps ▪ Class/ student management ▪ School experiences ▪ School administrative support mechanisms ▪ Coping strategies ▪ Stepping stone
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Table 5.1 is a list of the twenty-two categories, which was presented in detail in Chapter Four (Table 4.5). A face-value analysis of the twenty-two categories supports the finding from most research on beginning teaching that associates the first year of teaching with experiences of problems and challenges (e.g. see Holy & Spero, 2005; Mokgatle and Acker, 2002; So & Watkins, 2005; Veenman, 1984). However, further critical analysis was necessary to uncover underlying factors behind the teachers' experiences. This was done during the post-data-development data analysis.

5.3 Post-data-development data analysis

Post-data-development data analysis consisted of the analytical procedure that was used in the inductive process to generate the substantive-level theory for this study. Post-data-development data analysis was aimed at starting to make links in the categories developed. This was achieved through several analytical processes. Firstly, further constant comparison of categories was used to further reduce the level-2 categories. During this time some categories were combined or renamed.

The second step of the analysis was done through use of visualisation. Visualisation through use of logic diagrams (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were drawn to identify relationships. This was a useful technique to bring greater clarity on the links between categories. For example, by linking up some categories, two new categories were created as contextual factors and high expectations (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3)

Figure 5.2 Contextual factors

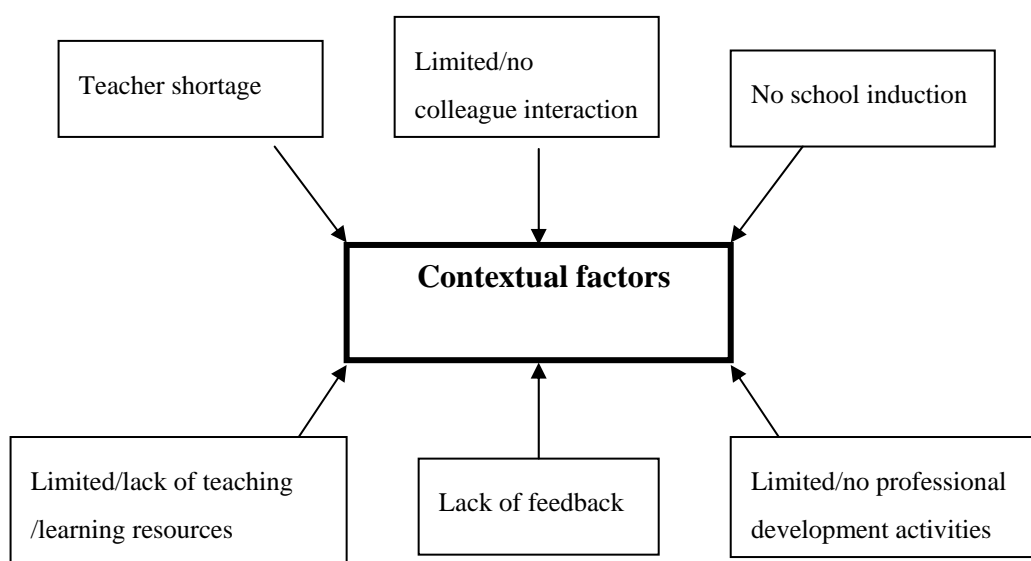
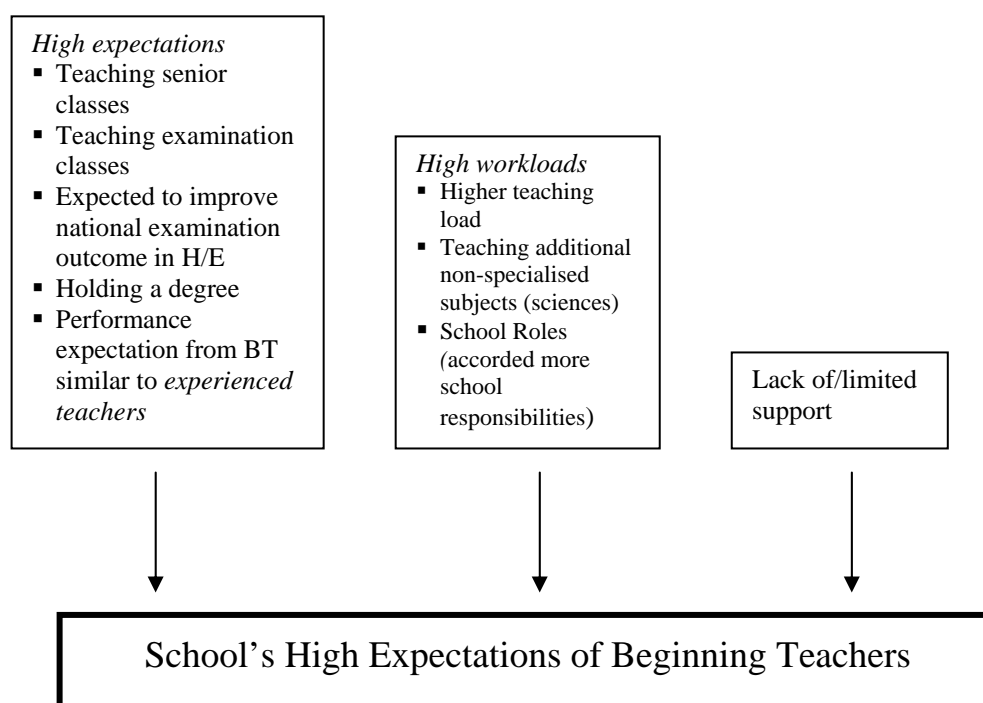
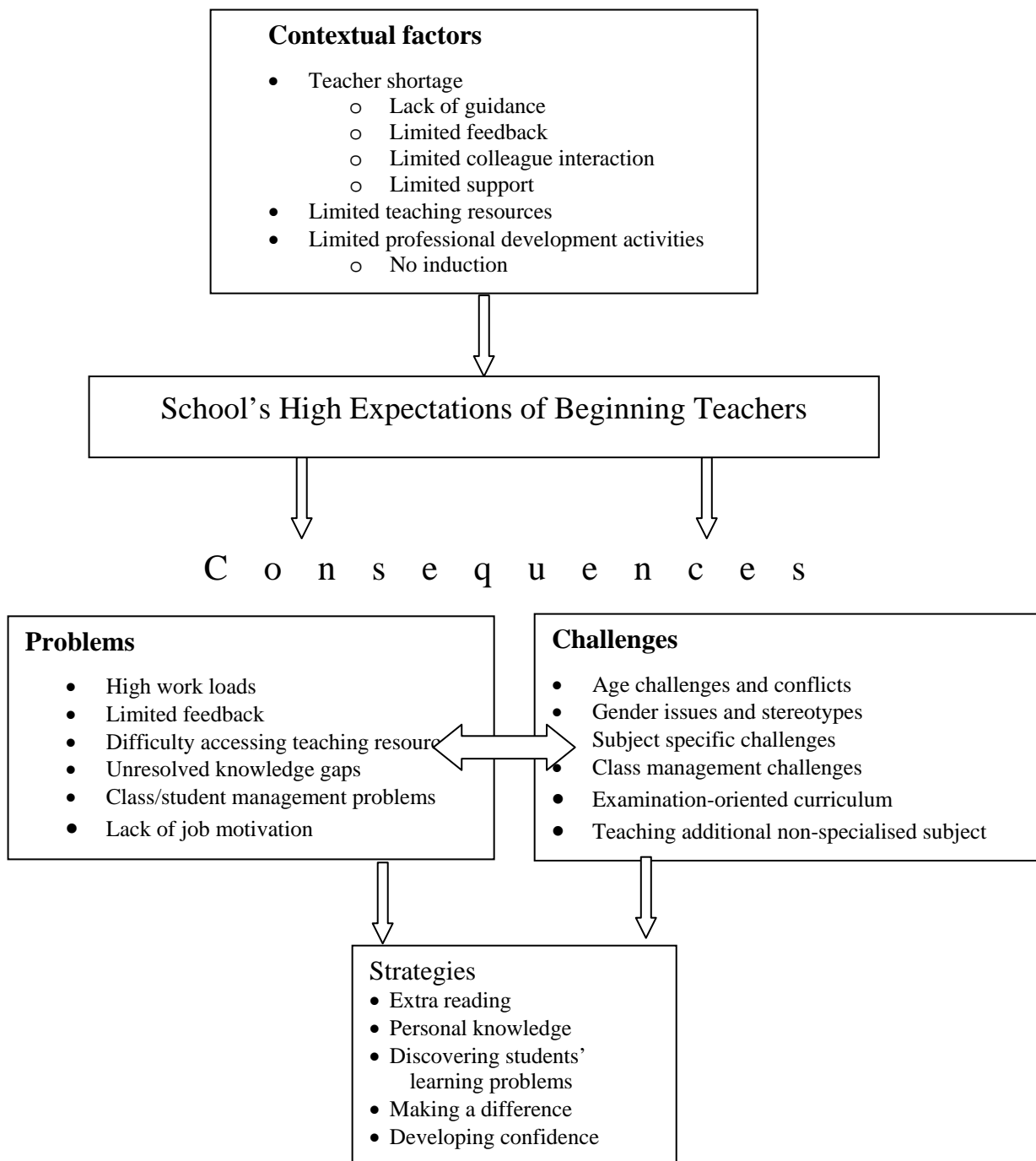


Figure 5.3 High expectations



The third step was to move the data to a more abstract level, which Glaser & Strauss (1967) call theoretical coding. Theoretical coding was used to uncover the categories' relationships to one another. In this case categories were analysed to identify *context conditions*, *consequences* and *strategies*. Combining this strategy with visualisation led to the development of the first conceptual diagram of the process, which is presented in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4 First conceptual diagram of all categories



Development of the conceptual diagram in Figure 5.3 led to identification and confirmation of two important links in the teachers' experiences. Firstly, links between some of the problems and challenges (consequences) were established, which led to some more categories being combined and reduced to three categories of biographical factors, subject-specific factors and instructional factors (see Figures 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7). Secondly, a link was created between contextual factors and high expectations, and also between the high expectations and the problems and challenges which were characteristic of the teachers' experiences.

Figure 5.5 Biographical factors

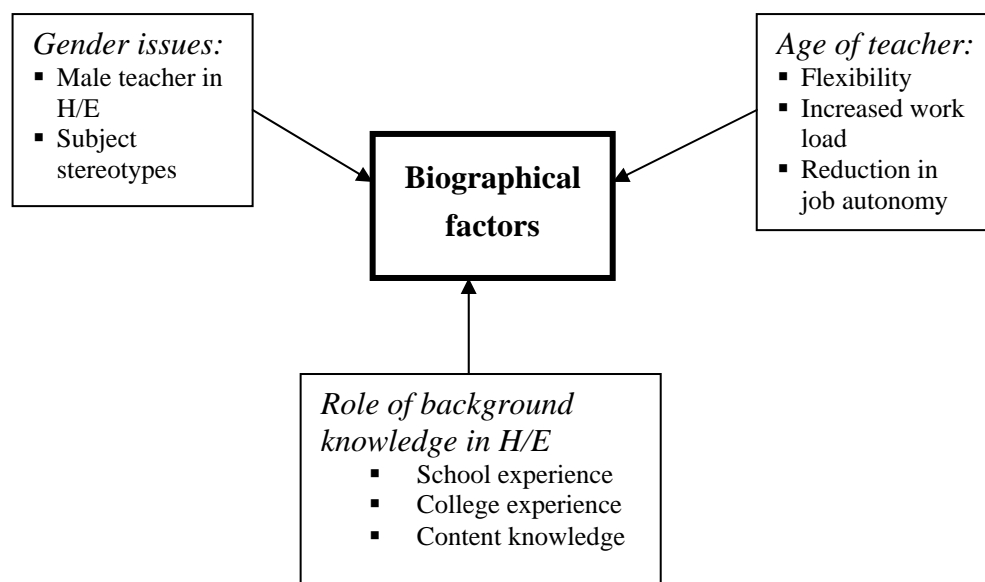


Figure 5.6 Subject-specific factors

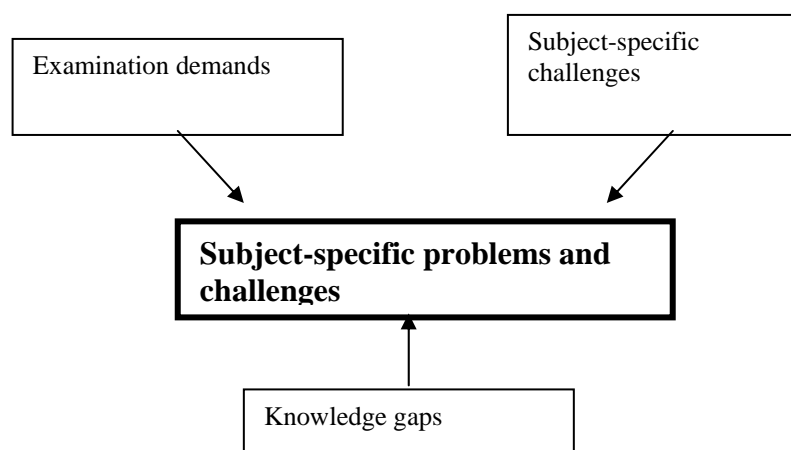
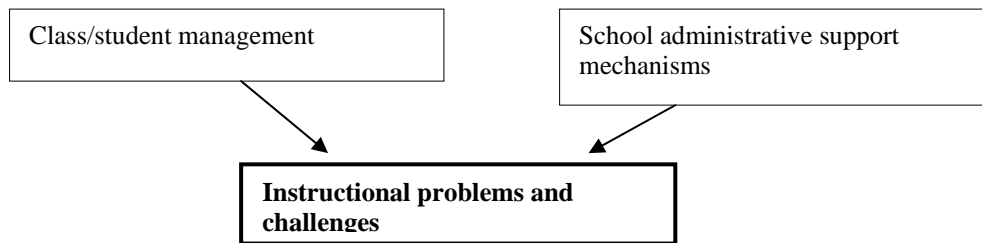


Figure 5.7: Instructional factors



The final step was then to identify a core category/variable. According to Glaser (1978), the core variable is the process that (a) is central and related to as many other categories as possible, (b) continuously occurs in the data, and (c) accounts for most of the variation. Through the use of the logic diagrams, it had already been possible to combine several categories into one category called contextual factors, which then became the most frequently occurring variable. Contextual factors were also found to affect beginning teachers' professional life indirectly through the high expectations that the schools had of the teachers as a consequence of the limitations in the school context (e.g. teacher shortage). Furthermore, contextual factors were also the category that best explained the causes of the mismatches in the beginning teachers' experiences, and the challenges and problems encountered in their teaching. These issues are explained in detail in the later sections of this chapter.

At this stage any category that did not seem to add meaning to the emerging theory had to be dropped. In this analysis 'familiarity' was dropped. The initial twenty-two categories had now been reduced to six. These were now the level-3 categories and consisted of the following:

- Contextual factors;
- High expectations on beginning teachers;
- Personal/biographic factors;
- Subject-specific factors;

- Instructional factors;
- Coping strategies.

These six categories are also the main themes that underlie conceptualisation of the professional experiences of beginning Home Economics teachers in this study. What follows next is an interpretation of the data by way of retroductive discussion of the categories identified.

5.4 Contextual factors

In the analysis summarised in Figure 5.2, I defined contextual factors as being comprised of six school characteristics: teacher shortage, limited/lack of colleague interaction, limited/lack of feedback, limited/lack of teaching and learning resources, limited/no professional development activities and the absence of school induction. In this section I present interpretation of data from the teachers' experiences of these factors.

5.4.1 Teacher shortage and workload experiences

In this study teacher shortage was identified as a common characteristic of the schools where the beginning teachers were teaching. Teacher shortage was a problem, because it increased the teachers' workload. For example, Andy was teaching in a school where there was no other Home Economics teacher at the start of his career. He was therefore teaching all the classes in which Home Economics was offered (Forms 1, 2 and 4).

...I was told that I was relieved from teaching Agriculture; instead I should concentrate on teaching Home Economics. Being the only Home Economics teacher, I am to teach in all the forms that have Home Economics (Forms 1, 2 and 4). This means that the periods have increased from 17 to 22 in a week and that I will now be having 15 new lessons to prepare for. I felt so concerned with this development (Andy: Diary reflection 24/03/06).

Andy expected that, as a beginning teacher, he would be posted to a school where he would be provided with support and guidance in his teaching. Instead, he found himself as the only Home Economics teacher in the school. For Andy this was an overwhelming experience and he attributed it to most of the problems that he experienced in teaching, such as problems with meeting the demands of the subject, difficulties in identifying relevant reference materials and coping with the high expectations of his school and colleagues.

I never expected to go to a place where I would find there is nobody to guide me. But having come here and finding there is no one to say this is how we teach and this is where we get information..., for your information, Home Economics at senior level is very challenging, especially when you think of references. It's not that you go to a particular book and you find all the information from that book, like in other subjects. For Home Economics you have to search in different books, and if you are lazy... the end result is disastrous. For your information, the results have just come out, and it's pathetic to see that in the Science Department HE is the lowest in terms of performance. The highest for is, I think a 7, for the internal students. It is the same pass rate, but the quality of passing.... I cannot put the blame on the people that were teaching, but then it is very challenging for me to take up that challenge because people are looking up to me to say "What is he going to do to change the tables?" Because they are expecting me to change the situation. I have no experience but then they have given me Form 4..., and I do not know the students' background, but I have accepted the challenge (Andy: Face-to-face interview).

Similar experiences were echoed from the other beginning teachers. Berth was teaching in a school where she felt there were too few Home Economics teachers in relation to the number of classes that they had to teach. She therefore felt that her teaching load was heavy. Andy, Dan and Eddy complained of teacher turnover as a cause of the teacher shortages in their schools. Teachers who left the schools were not replaced and the remaining teachers had to share the teaching load in order to avoid disturbing students in the middle of the school term. Furthermore, Cathy, Andy and Dan were teaching additional non-specialised subjects (Agriculture, Biology and Mathematics), in addition to Home Economics, because of teacher shortages in their schools. Frank was the only teacher who did not experience problems of teacher shortages in his school.

After qualifying for teaching I was asked to also teach Agriculture, because there was a shortage of teachers, and by the fact that I was in the Science section, they said if you are in the sciences, you have to be conversant with the other sciences (Cathy: Interview).

The other problem is that here at SOS teachers do not stay long. Maybe if there are some grudges between staff and the community, you just find out that the staff member has been transferred. Another problem is that staff members are always leaving for greener pastures all the time. When I started teaching Biology, there were about 3 teachers leaving and students get confused in class with the changing of teachers all the time, because one teacher plan his work differently than the other one who comes in. There is no continuity of class work. For me this was a challenge when I started teaching. I started a topic on digestion, but I found out that the previous teacher had not taught the topic on nutrition. I had to go back to nutrition before continuing with digestion topic in order to make the students understand the lessons (Dan: Face-to-face interview).

One of the senior teachers in the Home Economics department has retired. This makes life tough for me, because it means reshuffling the class and subject allocation. For instance I was told to be teaching Forms 3 and 4, which were initially being taught by Mrs X. This means the workload has increased (Eddy: Diary entry, 10/2/06).

Eddy also noticed that the teacher shortage was made worse in Home Economics because of local school politics. Even if there were other teachers qualified to teach Home Economics, school and interpersonal problems precluded some Home Economics teachers from teaching the subject. This resulted in Eddy having a high work load and big class sizes in Home Economics.

... there are only two teachers in Home Economics and yet there are several of us qualified to teach the subject. The others do not teach Home Economics due to interpersonal conflicts. This is a problem because it causes shortage of teachers. I have ended up having a big class and too much work load (Eddy: Face-to-face interview).

Because of the teacher shortages in the schools, the teachers' reflections of their initial teaching experiences show mismatches between their prior teaching expectations and their school experiences. They had expected that as beginners they would be given lower teaching loads, but that was not what they experienced in the schools.

Apart from the high teaching load and having to teach additional non-specialised subjects, mismatches were also described in terms of the type of classes that the teachers were allocated. Some of the teachers were allocated to teach senior classes (Forms 3 and 4), or examination classes (Forms 2 and 4). As beginning teachers, their expectation had been that their load would have a deliberate emphasis on teaching at the junior level or the non-examination classes.

The workload, as you can see from the list is the same as any teacher. As a beginning teacher as you can see, am teaching Forms 3 and 4. I thought as a beginning teacher I would be given Form 1s and Form 2s. This makes me feel that my colleagues expect a lot from me (Andy: Face-to-face interview).

They now take me as part of the staff. Now we are given much [heavier] load than any other teacher. In Biology at the moment I have 20 periods compared to others that have 9. The fact that I am at least flexible also makes me take in more. I started off teaching Home Economics and Social Studies last semester. Some teachers do not accept to do it, they say I can't teach more than 20 periods a week, some not even more than 15 (Dan: Face-to-face interview).

In the analysis of the results, high workload refers to teaching load and school roles. The beginning teachers in this study also played several other roles in the school and had several responsibilities in the school. They were class teachers, members of different school committees, patrons of student organisations, school counsellors, staff secretaries and much more. They were also perceived as role models to students in the schools. They took up

some of these roles because they were in their areas of interest, but sometimes they had to renegotiate their roles because they did not feel comfortable with them. Participation in the school roles was sometimes perceived as useful, because they learned new skills, but at other times the roles were perceived as a burden, considering their already heavy teaching loads.

I am a Form 4 form teacher, at the same time I have been assigned to the entertainment committee... but I am not comfortable with it. I think I am going to swap with a colleague who was placed in SCOM and he has never been in SCOM (Andy: Interview).

I was given a class to be a form teacher; I took it in Form 3 and now in Form 4. And this year am patron for SCOM. I am also called upon to sit in the disciplinary committee and help in counselling students. I am invited in the discipline committee, because the school also takes us as role models, especially for girls, so that they can also aspire to finish school, because most of the cases that I have been called upon are boy/girl relationships..... Participation in this committee has been an opportunity for me, because I have learnt how to handle students, because it can be tricky. Sitting in the panel has helped me learn how you can frame questions so that even if students start with lies, they end up telling the truth (Cathy: Face-to-face interview).

Some of the teachers took up very senior roles and positions in their schools. This study took place between the fourth and ninth months of the teachers teaching. Berth described her school roles during this time as follows:

I was the Head of summer school organised in the last school break. Acted as Head of Languages section when the HOD was away... but this post was imposed on me when everyone else had refused, saying it was demanding. I am also a 1 west form-teacher, Patron for CCAPPSO, Sports mistress... took this over from someone else, but it's an area that I like.... I also provide support to the TP students (Berth: Interview).

During her first nine months on the job, Berth headed a summer school that was run in the school, acted as Head of the languages department and was a mentor to a student teacher who was doing her teaching practice in the school. These were roles of a beginning teacher who was also complaining that her teaching load was heavy.

Frank also assumed very high positions in his school. During the time of this study, Frank was the head of the Science Department and chair of the school's sanitation committee. Frank was very conscious of the high expectations that the school had of him. He noted that, apart from just being expected to perform as any other teacher, his Head and colleagues expected him to bring in new knowledge and change in the school. He therefore felt that he had to work even harder in order to live up to this expectation.

I felt that they expected me to bring in something new and important as a Home Economics teacher. As a result you try hard to live to that expectation and make a contribution. So this influences the way I participate in the school. I now do more research and I have learnt more about my subject.... It's also because of expectations from other teachers. Everyday I get challenged when they ask me questions about my subject. I don't want to say I don't know, so I go and find out the information. There is also a student teacher on TP. She comes to me with questions, and I have to show her that I know what she is asking about. So I am still reading a lot to make sure that I am very familiar with what is in the syllabus and the subject (Frank: Reflection interview).

A similar observation of the high expectation held by the school is echoed in Dan's reflection interview, where he felt that the high expectations in the school had made him change in order to fit into what was expected of him.

SOS has orphans of different backgrounds. The challenges that I have met have made me mature and look at things from a different perspective. I shouldn't expect that I will always know what to expect from students because they are of different backgrounds. I was at times asked to counsel students at one SOS house because they trusted that I could do it (Dan: Reflection interview).

This high expectation, the heavy teaching loads and varied roles were found to have significant consequences for their teaching for the six beginning teachers in this study. The immediate impact of the heavy teaching loads and various school roles was that quality of teaching was affected and time for lesson preparation was limited. There were also some indications of stress from the pressures of the challenges and problems that the beginning teachers experienced. For example, Cathy mentioned of the pressure of teaching an examination class.

You know Geography was my minor in college and Agriculture I never did in college. The thing that helped me plan are the past papers. Usually I looked at the past papers, just to see how the exam is formed, so that I also follow similar format, bearing in mind that I was teaching Form 4, an examination class. So it means that, if they are going to fail, they are going to look at me and say you didn't teach us well (Cathy: Interview).

These results indicate that the new teachers in this study felt beleaguered because of their teaching loads, roles and the school expectations. This was a recurrent theme, especially among the beginning teachers who were teaching Forms 2 and 4 because of the lack of guidance from an experienced teacher, Cathy resorted to focusing on past examination papers as a guide. Furthermore, when reflecting on the then just ended student assessment process, Andy recalled that an additional challenge that he had to face was having to examine a class that he had barely taught, and work with students whom he did not know very well.

On exams in Form 2 it was not easy, it was challenging... Challenging because I took them for just a week or two, so they had covered very little stuff. So to form an exam from there was not easy, especially multiple choice. So it took me time. I finished Form 4, Form 3 Home Economics and Agriculture but for this one it took me time... a month and some days to formulate the exam.... There was little, especially what I had taught them. So since I had taught very little... of course there was some stuff that they had learnt in Form 1, but they were not with me in Form 1, so it was like everything that I was formulating was new, and the students too were new to me (Andy: Reflection interview).

The school experiences of the teachers in this study show lack of support from experienced teachers as a major handicap for the new teachers. They seemed to have not much option for coping with such challenges and resorted to past national examination papers as a key resource for informing their teaching. These issues are discussed in detail in section 5.7, as they relate to problems and challenges that these teachers experienced.

School roles were perceived as affecting the teachers' ability to spend more time to prepare for their teaching roles. Preparing for a range of subjects and at various levels requires a lot of work and time. This was made even more difficult when a teacher had to prepare for a subject in which s/he had no or limited background. This was a double challenge for Andy, Cathy and Dan, considering that this was also their first year of teaching.

I was asked by the HOD and then by the Head teachers to consider if I can as well start teaching the Form 2s (Home Economics) following the departure of their teacher. The impression that I have is that I will not be able to teach to the best of my ability. The periods for me will just be too much for thorough preparation. I cannot make it to the expected level, being a new teacher. However, I still accepted that I will be teaching them (Andy: Diary reflection 26/02/06).

I have realised that there is a role conflict. I am failing to complete my tasks, to attend to my periods in Form 1, because of being both a form teacher and a chairman of sanitation (Frank: Diary entry 11/02/06).

The results in this section show that, as a result of teacher shortages the beginning teachers in this study took up heavy teaching loads and assumed a lot of school responsibilities. Teacher shortage has become a topical issue of concern in most countries in the sub-Saharan region. The literature and statistics in the region indicate that in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa the projected demand for secondary school teachers exceeds the projected supply (Craig, Kraft & du Plessis, 1998; Mulkeen, Chapman & DeJaeghere, 2004a; Mulkeen, Chapman & DeJaeghere, 2004b; UNESCO, 2002). In the present study teacher shortage was the underlying factor that influenced and affected much of the beginning teachers' initial experiences of teaching. Teacher shortage was a problem, because it increased the beginning teachers' workload.

There is growing evidence in the literature that teachers' work is increasing. Several studies have shown that teachers are working significantly longer hours than they are paid for (Drago, Constanza, Caplan, Brubaker, Harris, Cloud, Kashian & Riggs 1999, 2000; Easthope, 1997; Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 2001). Past research has also identified workload as a problem that affects beginning teachers (Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975). However, these early studies have mostly related the beginning teachers' workload problems to the complex nature of teaching as a career. The current study shows that, apart from the complexities of teaching, these beginning teachers also experienced high workloads as a result of teacher shortages. This finding shows that the schools' teacher staffing situation had a profound effect on determining the reality experience of the six beginning Home Economics teachers. It determined how much work the beginning teachers were allocated, what subjects they taught, and what was expected of them in the school.

Another issue in this study is that of teaching in a subject outside the beginning teachers' specialisation. Mulkeen *et al.* (2004a), citing research in the USA, observed that there is a positive correlation between teachers' knowledge of their subject and their impact in the classroom. The research shows that in many cases teachers' lack of understanding of the principles of their subject may impede good teaching. Specific research on beginning teachers teaching outside their specialisation is scarce, but the study by Mulkeen *et al.* (2004a) serves to emphasise the difficult situation that the teachers in this study experienced, considering that they were just beginning teachers.

The findings in this study show that there were mismatches between the beginning teachers' prior expectations of their work roles and their actual experiences on the job. This finding bears a lot of similarity to some past studies about teaching. For instance, Flores & Day's (2006) study of beginning teachers shows that beginning teachers' experiences highlighted mismatches between their (initial) beliefs and images about teaching and the images that they were expected to perform as first-year teachers. Similarly, Bartlett's (2004) study of teacher work roles in the UK found significant mismatches between teachers' role conception and an organisation's role conception, which were manifested in its material support and creation of inconsistent conditions. In the present study the mismatch has been attributed to the teacher shortages in the schools. The mismatches are also indicative of differences in the assumptions about beginning teaching developed during pre-service teacher training and the assumptions held in the school system.

5.4.2 Colleague interaction, support and feedback

Teaching in this study was generally described as individual work. The six beginning teachers received little to no support in their initial teaching placements. They did not get feedback on their performance as beginning

teachers, and there was very minimal colleague interaction in the schools.

Although just in their first year, all the teachers received very limited support or assistance in the planning of their work. None of the teachers received support in the teaching and management of their classes. The schools had some mechanisms for ensuring that teachers planned their work, such as requiring that all teachers develop schemes and records of work for their classes; however, even these were sometimes referred to as just formalities with no checks on the content of their work plans. This was the way the beginning teachers interpreted the way their colleagues conducted their daily activities and they just fitted into the system. The general expectation from the schools was that the beginning teachers who had completed a teaching degree would just be able to fit into the school system, without requiring assistance or support.

All teachers in this school work as individuals. You make your own scheme and just start teaching. The heads of departments do not check your scheme. They sign the weekly plan, but no comments are made. It's just to check that you have written a scheme. I do likewise, and don't ask much, because if I do, they will say "Did you not learn this at CHANCO?" (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

Personally, I don't know how you look at it, but I do not consult anybody when I do my lesson plans. I stopped writing lesson plans soon after Teaching Practice for three or so weeks, but I have resumed writing them. I realised that lesson plans are very important, because you are able to see your progress. Lesson plans also help me to do my job, even when we write schemes which go to the head of the department, I am told that he just signs and it all ends there. I know that it's all up to me to plan what I teach (Eddy: Face-to-face interview).

I don't get any support. I have no mentor (in Home Economics) what so ever. If I have problem, I have to find my own solutions (Cathy: Face-to-face interview).

The perception that beginning teachers who have graduated with a bachelor's degree in education should be ready and able to take up their teaching responsibilities was common in the schools. The beginning teachers themselves also seemed to share this view. This partly contributed to the absence or limited support that these teachers received: it precluded the beginning teachers from asking for support, and at the same time the experienced colleagues expected that they would not face any difficulties.

The beginning teachers who had experienced Home Economics teachers in their schools often described the support that they received as limited but valuable. However, the support received was mostly in the form of consultation.

Support is provided upon request.... When approached, she (the experienced teacher) opens up and explains things to me very well. She is in fact happy to assist when approached (Cathy: Interview)

Some of the topics [for which] I don't have approaches that will deliver in class, I contact some teachers that have experience, how do you do this? How can I do this? I did much of this in Home Economics, because we didn't do much of textiles in college. The time I was arriving I was supposed to teach a topic in textiles, so I contacted the Home Economics teacher who helped me.

Support is limited to consultation. I can consult Madam X when I have a question or anything (Eddy: Interview).

Considering that, in general, these schools were experiencing teacher shortages, experienced teachers may also have been experiencing similar pressures of work as the beginners were. This could be another reason why the experienced teachers had limited time to help and guide the beginners.

However, this does not mean that all colleagues would provide supportive assistance when needed. Beginning teachers also complained of poor colleague interaction and lack of support.

I was annoyed by one of the teachers who said that he could not attend the mini caucus that I called for simply because I have just joined the teaching profession. The idea I was trying to sell was to do with fund-raising activities so that the section can be self-reliant. Much as I would want to change the Home Economics department for the better, there are such hiccups emanating from experienced teachers who in normal circumstances are supposed to be supportive (Eddy: Diary entry 27/1/2006).

For example, I initiated a project to separate boys and girls in Form 3. When I first suggested it, all the senior teachers objected to it, saying girls don't work hard and it is a waste of time. Some of these senior teachers even asked me, "Who do you want to be? To impress? To make people see that you are good and we are bad?" Negative comments all the time (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

... and he is not the only teacher we had problems with. Another teacher wants all the time he has a double period, Physical Science that is, to be in the lab. No body else can be in the lab at his time. So he wanted us to change the time table as well. So it was the deputy who came in and said it's not easy to meet *all* the people's demands. And there is also this lady teacher who is very delicate to handle. *Akangokukwiyira* [once cross with you], she doesn't talk to you... she doesn't do anything to you ... she wants everything to be done her way. You have to tolerate everything that you never expected you would (Cathy: Reflection interview).

In terms of feedback, none of the schools provided any form of feedback to the beginning teachers and yet feedback was perceived as important for their progress.

I have received no feedback of any type from my head or colleagues concerning my work and I don't know whether that means all is fine or not, because people tend to be silent when it's negative feedback. (Andy: Face-to-face interview).

Yes, I feel it would have been different, because even up to now I am still not comfortable as to how the students will manage during the examinations. I feel like if we had somebody experienced who would say to them: this is what is expected, you should do this, that and that. Because sometimes you can be doing the right things, but because you are not experienced in doing them, you still do not feel comfortable. You don't know you are doing the right thing until it has come to pass. So I feel that I am just trying out things (Andy: Reflection interview).

None at the moment. I just do my work and I don't get any follow-up. One time we made a suggestion that sometimes it is good for us to sit in one another's class so that we can watch what the other teachers are doing, but this did not work at all (Eddy: Face-to-face interview).

I haven't received any feedback. I go to class and come back, that's it. No one follows up (Frank: Face-to-face interview).

The quotations from Andy and Eddy show that the beginning teachers valued feedback. The absence of formal feedback from colleagues in the school system left the beginning teachers uncertain of their progress as beginners. The only feedback that the beginning teachers received about their teaching was from their students. This was always positive feedback.

I only get feedback on my work when teachers hear something from students. Of late it has been only positive feedback, because the students are making a request to their form teacher that I should continue teaching them, because they feel I am teaching them a lot of things and they understand and enjoy my teaching (Berth: Interview).

All the pupils are happy that I am their new teacher. One student even told me that she is very happy to have me as her Home Economics teacher (Eddy: Diary entry, 10/2/06).

The Head gets the schemes to check if you have planned a scheme and stamps in, but I have never received any feedback to say this should be like this or why this. I think they get them to just make sure you have a scheme (Eddy: Reflection interview).

The trend that emerged from these reflections and interviews is that the beginning year for these teachers was characterised by individual work, with limited collegial interaction, and limited or no support or feedback. Lortie (1975) observed that a number of problems arise for teachers who rely most exclusively on trial and error, just as was the case in the present study. Such practice is also contrary to current trends for effective initial teacher development, as reported in the literature in Chapter Two (see, for example, Weiss, 199; White & Moss, 2003; Wong & Wong, 1998; Wolfe, Bartell *et al.*, 2000).

The findings on the nature of teacher support and feedback in this study share a lot of similarities to most studies conducted in most African countries. For instance, Mokgatle & Acker's (2002) study, cited in Chapter Two, echoes a similar problem. Another is a report of a World Bank thematic study of secondary school teacher recruitment, retention and retraining in sub-Saharan Africa, which identified the ongoing opportunity to talk with other professionals regarding personal challenges and experiences as a key support mechanism to teachers which was missing in the sub-Saharan schools (Mulkeen *et al.*, 2004a). Furthermore, the World Bank report also noted that teacher supervision and monitoring were absent in most of the schools in the African countries. All these were typical characteristics of the schools in the present study.

The results in this study confirm the findings of several earlier studies that have emphasised the significant role of the school environment and its impact on teachers and teaching as a profession. For instance, the findings have a lot of similarity to those of Rosenholtz (1991) on the effects of the social organisation of schools and its impact on teachers and teaching. Specifically, the situation in this study fits Rosenholtz's (1991) category of schools that were characterised as limited settings or impoverished schools. Rosenholtz (1991) observed that teachers in such schools were uncertain about the technical culture and their instructional capabilities. Rosenholtz (1991:11) contends that "uncertainty about the technology of teaching is the enemy of rational planning and action". "Uncertainty" was one of the problems that teachers in the present study experienced as a result of lack of a collegial culture, support and lack of feedback.

In the literature, lack of support is very closely linked to high teacher attrition rates (Bartlett, 2004). The continued lack of support in the present study is likely to lead to a greater risk of attrition because of the experiences of tension and pressure of work. This practice could partly explain the existence of a high teacher attrition rate, which is a well-known problem in Malawi (MOE, 2000).

5.4.3 Limited/lack of teaching and learning resources

Limited or lack of teaching and learning resources has also been identified as a characteristic of the school context in this study. The beginning teachers in this study reported that current school funding was inadequate for the general running of the schools. Therefore activities had to be prioritised among the many school needs. During classroom observation, the resource constraints were very obvious. Shortage of desks and chairs was common. Some students wrote with books placed on their laps, while in other schools students sat on desks (not chairs). In one school students had to move with chairs from

their classroom to the Home Economics laboratory. In the Home Economics laboratory, a lot of equipment was either broken or not working, so the classes could not use them.

Teachers also experienced serious shortages of reference materials. Flip charts for making visual aids to illustrate their work had to be improvised from old calendars. Sometimes even dusters for cleaning the chalkboard had to be improvised. In all the schools the resource that was readily available was the chalk board. These shortcomings, along with many others, were reported to affect the selection of teaching content as well as teaching and learning experiences to be used during lessons. The challenges and problems that these constraints caused to these new teachers are discussed in section 5.7, as they are related to subject specific (Home Economics) challenges.

The problem of limited funding and shortage of teaching and learning resources is neither new nor typical to Malawi. It is a common problem in most developing nations (Craig *et al.*, 1998). In Malawi inadequate teaching and learning resources was attributed to the decline in education standards following the introduction of Free Primary Education (FPE) in 1994. The problem is still persistent and well documented, especially in the literature on primary school teacher education. One of the most prominent sources is the Multi-site Teacher Education Project (MUSTER) in which, in reporting the lessons learnt from their experience in Malawi, Lewin & Stuart (2003:93) stated: "It is extremely difficult to train new teachers in school conditions where so many basic resources, both human and material are lacking". The findings in this study show that the problem of shortages in teaching and learning resources is also prevalent at the secondary school level. The impact of the constrained school environment on the experiences of the six teachers is discussed in section 5.7 of this chapter.

5.4.4 Professional development activities and school induction

The results of this study show that there were very limited opportunities for professional development for the six teachers in the schools. Furthermore, none of the schools offered any form of school induction for the new teachers.

In terms of professional development activities, Andy, Berth and Cathy, who were teaching in the same district, had attended one in-service workshop. The workshop was not necessarily targeting beginning teachers, but was a general teaching methodology workshop for all Science teachers. Not one of the three teachers anticipated another possibility of a professional development activity in the near future.

During the holiday, I attended a SEMASE [Strengthening of Mathematics and Science Education at Secondary Level] training... But as a teacher, I don't see any opportunities for professional development in the near future (Cathy: Face-to-face interview).

I have attended a week of an INSET course organised by SMSTE [Society for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education]. It was a course open to all science teachers in the school. Apart from that, there doesn't seem to be anything else set (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

In December, last year I was called for a SEMASE workshop, just like any other teacher that has been here for some time, I attended the training ... of course, that was for strengthening the teaching of science and mathematics (Andy: Face-to-face interview).

Dan attended a different teachers' workshop in his district. He felt it was a very enriching experience and highly praised the experience and made the observation that workshops are an important part of any organisation for assessment of attainment of organisational goals.

It has come to my realisation that workshops are part and parcel of any organisation. As an organisation you have to assess the progress of your projects/undertakings. This makes you work on the shortfalls and improve on them (Dan: Diary reflection 25/04/06).

Eddy and Frank had not attended any professional development activity at the time of this study. They also did not see any chances of attending one in the near future.

None yet and I don't see any opportunities (Eddy: Face-to-face interview)

Our head goes to attend workshops and seminars. But I haven't seen any of the other teachers attending. It's only when they go for MSCE marking (Frank: Face-to-face interview).

As a teacher myself, who works in this context, it came as no surprise that these teachers expressed pessimism on ever attending any professional development activity of any kind, as this is not the culture of the school system in Malawi.

In addition to the limited or non-existent professional development opportunities, none of the schools visited in this study offered any form of induction to the beginning teachers. As indicated earlier, the general expectation was that these graduate beginning teachers would just fit in without problems. The teachers reported that for other additional school roles and routines, they learnt them on the job by observing how other teachers conducted themselves. In some cases the teachers did not even have access to teachers' terms and conditions of service.

... the first day I reported for work, I asked for Conditions of Services, and he (the Head teacher) said we shall have a day's seminar for

familiarisation, but nothing has been done yet (Cathy: Face-to-face interview)

The literature review in Chapter Two defined teacher induction as part of the socialisation process that takes place in any organisation. In the literature this process of assimilating new teachers into the culture of the school (Rippon & Martin, 2006) has been described as an important process that facilitates a smooth transition into the profession. The research therefore indicates that the first year of teaching in many countries now includes a formal induction system, where beginning teachers work closely with a mentor, induction supporter, supervisor, or an experienced teacher, as the case may be. This is seen as a way of reducing practice shocks and the many challenges and problems that have been associated with first-year teaching (Griffin *et al.*, 1983; Darling-Hamond, 1990; Huling-Austin, 1990). Furthermore, supportive and sustained induction is perceived necessary to stem high attrition rates of new teachers, which is another major concern in the beginning teacher literature (Houston *et al.*, 1990). Yet the school system in Malawi, as observed in this study, does not offer any form of teacher induction for beginning teachers.

Darling-Hammond (1990:288-289) argues that in addition to reducing the sink or swim experience in beginning teaching, intensive induction of new teachers before they can be allowed or expected to teach without supervision is a crucial practice for two reasons:

- (a) because teaching is complex and requires judgements in its application, it can not be fully acquired in a classroom setting and (b) because a teaching profession is first and foremost committed to the welfare of students, inexperienced practitioners can not be allowed to learn on the job without guidance.

Although it seems well established that induction initiatives for new teachers have a useful and necessary role to play in developing effective teachers, the practice observed in this study indicates that this does not occur. The perception held by schools in this study was that a graduate teacher should be capable of conducting her/his teaching duties without requiring further support. As a consequence of this perception, the teachers' experiences of the first year were full of challenges and problems. These problems and challenges are discussed in full in sections 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8.

5.5 High expectations

The analysis of high expectations as a category is summarised in Figure 5.3. The main issues under this category have already been presented in the preceding section. Teacher shortages in the schools seem to have been the main reason behind the high expectations that beginning teachers experienced in the schools.

In addition to the teacher shortage, it has also been indicated that the high expectation was also because these new teachers were university graduates.

Sometimes I feel more work is given to us because they say you are coming from CHANCO, so you must know every thing. Most of the teachers here only have a diploma in education. So they kind of envy us young people just coming from college and because of this whenever I say I can't do this, they say you are still with a lot of ideas and you are from CHANCO (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

As reflected in Berth's interviews, all the beginning teachers in this study observed that their schools had a high expectation of them since "they were fresh from college, and with a university degree" (often referred to as "from CHANCO"). As Berth points out in her interview, the beginning teachers were usually amongst the most highly qualified teachers academically in the

schools. The majority of the teachers in the schools had a diploma in education as their highest qualification. The high expectation was also because they were seen as being flexible. Flexibility meant that they had no family commitments, so they could take on more school activities.

Further evidence of the school's high expectations came from the teachers who were teaching non-specialised subjects. For example, Andy who was teaching Agriculture, which was not his teaching subject, noticed that the head of department perceived him as capable of dealing with the subject without difficulty.

In Home Economics there was no [mentor].... The Head thought there was going to be someone to do this, but nothing yet. In Agriculture the teacher said we were going to meet and be briefed, but then to him, he also thinks I am capable of handling everything. I told him that we need to meet (Andy: Face-to-face interview).

The new teachers never expected that their Head teachers would have expectations of them as they would of any other experienced teacher in the school.

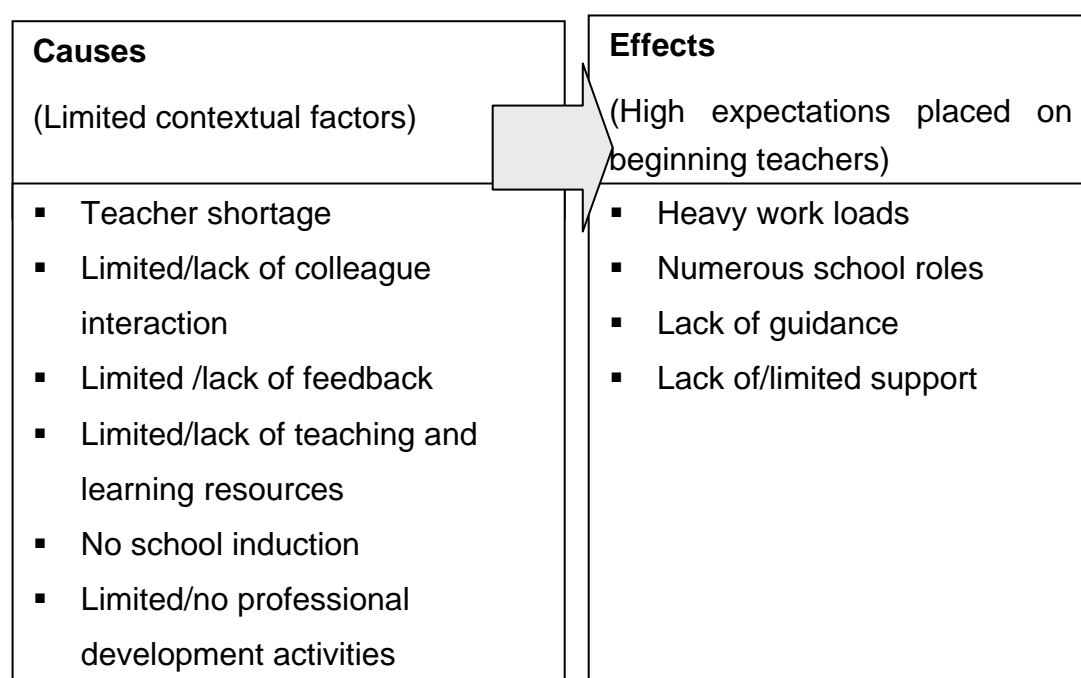
The Head and colleagues treat me as a fellow teacher who is experienced and I have seen that they also expect some things from me just as they expect from a teacher who has been here for some time. There is no difference (Andy: Face-to-face interview).

Nothing really happened this week, but I have noticed that the deputy head has trust in me (if I am not mistaken). This is noticed in the way he leaves/delegates responsibilities in his office. Whenever he is out of his office, he always leaves everything either with me or the senior teacher *only*. This has always given me some encouragement and a feeling of being reliable as a beginning teacher. Because there are a lot

of experienced teachers around, but it's not the same (Frank: Diary entry 04/03/02).

This study identifies the high expectations of the school, teachers as well as heads of departments, as another source of the mismatch in the beginning teachers' expectations. This mismatch is attributed to the nature of the school context. The constrained nature of the schools necessitated that beginners not be treated as beginners, but provide for the sustenance of the schools. This interaction between the contextual factors and the high expectations forms a significant cause-effect relationship, which I argue is the basis for understanding the six teachers' professional experiences (see Figure 5.8). I use the positivist concepts of *cause* and *effect* not in an attempt to create an objective reality, but to better explain the relationship between the two factors.

Figure 5.8: School context and high expectations: A cause-effect relationship



The experience of beginning teachers in this study is different from that

reported in most of the literature in beginning teaching, which is mostly from countries in the West (e.g. Weiss, 1999), in that these teachers entered a school system that expected them to bring in new ideas and change, and not be perceived as just beginners. The results also show that these teachers had full autonomy and discretion in dealing with their classes. Furthermore, the beginning teachers' involvement in the different school committees meant that they were part of the decision-making structures of the school system. In the literature on beginning teachers, teacher autonomy, discretion and participation in school leadership have been strongly associated with morale and commitment to teaching as a career (Weiss, 1999). Although holding such heavy responsibilities came with its burdens, it was also a positive factor which boosted their morale in the schools.

The findings in this study strongly concur with Rosenholtz's (1991) conclusion that the social organisation of the school is the reality definer of teaching. The constrained school context, with its high expectations of the beginning teachers, forms a core factor for understanding (and interpreting) the professional experiences of the six beginning teachers. The context and the high expectations were also the basis of the problems and challenges which were a main characteristic of these teachers' initial teaching experience. In the next section I discuss the challenges and problems experienced by the six Home Economics teachers.

5.6 Biographical challenges and problems

Biographical challenges and problems in this study refer to challenges and problems that the beginning teachers experienced as a consequence of their age, gender (sex) or their background in Home Economics. The experiences of these three factors differed across the six teachers but, in general, they formed an important point for reflection in the way they all described their initial experiences of teaching.

5.6.1 Age and gender as challenge

The teachers' appearance in terms of age and gender was found to be important for facilitating how the teachers came to be accepted in the school, especially in the initial months of teaching. For instance, Andy (aged 28) and Berth (aged 24) had different feelings about their early school experiences because of their perceived age differences. Andy was happy and satisfied with his interaction with staff in his school right from the start of his teaching. He attributed this to his ability to interact and communicate with colleagues. He did not feel any differential treatment based on age in his interactions with the school colleagues.

.... I feel that my individual characteristics have also assisted how I have gone through and interacted with members of staff. I relate to them as colleagues. I think they also see me as just another teacher, and if they look at me as a newcomer, or a young teacher in their midst, then I don't see it and if I don't feel it, then it does not matter (Andy: Reflection interview).

Beth was often very dissatisfied with her colleagues. She often felt that they did not make her feel fully accepted as a teacher and staff member. She attributed this to her being perceived as "too young to be a teacher".

In the first three months, members used to kind of frown at my age. They used to say that I am as young as the students that I teach. In fact I used to be treated as a young member of staff (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

Dan, Eddy and Frank experienced similar responses to their age in their early teaching days. Although this study found that the schools had high expectations of these teachers, there were also incidents when they felt that they were underrated by staff as well as students because of their age. Being perceived as young was often associated with receiving less respect as a teacher, a greater work load and being expected to be flexible to

accommodate other school activities at any time.

My being perceived as a young member was manifested in several ways: when something had to be done, they would say: Berth, can you do this, you have a lot of energy. For example, when everyone refused to organise students for 'Why Wait?', I was assigned the task. Prep supervision, I did it three times per week - because they said, "You have no one at home".... I think I am still being perceived as a young person. One of my fellow teachers shouted at me in front of students (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

In my first class, pupils were underrating me because of my age. As time passed, they developed confidence in me and they are free with me. I think this resulted from the type of interaction they had with me....we were now speaking the same language (Dan: Face-to-face interview).

Initially, when we just started teaching, they were taking us as students. When we asked for something, it took them time to act but now this is dying out and they accept us as teachers (Eddy: Reflection interview)

Sometimes age was also perceived as a limiting factor to the beginning teachers' autonomy on the job. Although in general all the teachers said that they enjoyed full autonomy in deciding what and how to conduct their class teaching, they perceived that they received differential treatment and limited autonomy, especially when making decisions outside the classroom activities, because of their age.

I am also not equally trusted on judgements and decisions that I have to make on duty. When I issued exits to students, it was an issue. I had to be called to explain and justify it to the Head. Other teachers do the same and no one ever bothers to even check what they did. (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

When I just came in, I was given my subject allocation and Mrs X said I will get the keys from her. But she never gave me... She expected me to be going to her every time I have a class just as the students... But

there are three sets of keys for the department (Eddy: Reflection interview).

These results indicate that the beginning teachers experienced differential treatment because they were perceived as young. In this case the young teachers felt that they did not always receive the respect given to the other teachers. The impact of age on teaching experiences has not received much attention in the literature (Zeichner & Gore, 1990). The results in this study serve to fill this gap in knowledge. The results support a view of age as an important factor that affects teacher socialisation. The beginning teachers in this study were aged between 24 and 25 years, with the exception of Andy who was 28. Andy and Cathy did not perceive age to be a problem in their teaching. While for Andy this could be explained by the fact that he was the oldest of the six teachers, for Cathy it could be probably because of her marital status (she was the only married teacher). From a cultural perspective, in Malawi age and marital status are respected and these could account for the differences in the teachers' experiences. However, professionally, beginning teachers would be expected to be assisted to blend into the school system regardless of their age or marital status.

Gender issues also played a role in the experiences of the six teachers. In this study, being a male Home Economics teacher was found to be a more challenging experience than being a female Home Economics teacher. The four male Home Economics beginning teachers in this study found that their students were often not ready to see a male Home Economics teacher in class. The beginning teachers themselves also sometimes seemed disturbed when faced with situations that defined Home Economics as a female-dominated subject. The male teachers felt disturbed by gender stereotypes that students had about Home Economics. For instance, Andy was approached by a female student to be his part-time teacher. The student felt she could easily do Home Economics well by virtue of being female. Andy felt disturbed by this perception, because he saw it as telling him that he was not

in the right profession (teaching subject). Reflecting on this experience, he made the following entry in his diary:

I felt very bad because of associating Home Economics with ladies. It's like I am not in the right field as a man. This made me think about fellow young men who say openly that they are not comfortable with teaching Home Economics because of the same.... How can one say that because she is a lady she can learn the four years' work in one week and manage to do well in an examination (Andy: Diary entry 19/01/06).

Dan was faced with situations where students did not accept him as a Home Economics teacher. From Dan's experience, a male Home Economics teacher first has to prove his competence in the subject matter before he can be fully accepted by students, the majority of whom were female.

My most challenging experience has been the night school. When I walked into the classroom, the women did not think I was going to be their teacher. I went in, told them that Mrs X would be going away and I was taking over the class. Then I saw it in their eyes. Everyone was quiet, and I said, "What's the problem?" It's then that one by one they raised their hands and I asked me questions. What do you know about Home Economics? I realised I had to make them trust me, gain their confidence, because it's what would make them continue coming to class. So I told them I am a Home Economics teacher in the school. and I graduated with a teaching degree majoring in Home Economics. The women needed to be convinced.... They always associated Home Economics with women. But also my age. So you know, they thought I knew nothing (Dan: Reflection interview).

Similarly, Eddy described his initial teaching challenge as getting beyond the gender stereotypes that his students had and the need to create a conducive learning environment.

At first, it was very difficult to control the students in the first week because the pupils were eager and more especially when they saw a male teacher teaching Home Economics. Then later they got used (Eddy: Face to face interview).

In Malawi gender roles are still distinctly defined by culture. As a male teacher teaching Home Economics, Andy also felt that he was constrained and felt less competent in teaching certain Home Economics concepts because of gender issues from a cultural and traditional perspective.

[Topics in] human growth like Child Care, of course, the Strides are there, but also it's because of the way we are brought up. Like care of children, as a young man I have never done that at home. So considering our local values and practices, I see that as also affecting the way I teach these concepts (Andy: Reflection interview).

It would seem that in college (university teacher training) it was becoming more acceptable that male students could do Home Economics, but the concept of a male Home Economics teacher was still very unfamiliar in the schools, especially for students.

The teachers also experienced problems because of gender stereotyping of certain concepts that were being taught. For instance, Berth observed that boys were not happy to be taught concepts that are traditionally perceived as feminine. In one instance she had to 'trick' them in order for them to participate in a class activity.

I took over a textiles class in Form 3 when their teacher was away. I had problems with boys to do the samples for garment construction because they said that was a woman's task. I had to lie. I told them that the practical would contribute 50% of their exam grade. This made the boys do the task, when in fact it was only 20% of the grade. This was a successful lesson because normally boys don't participate in group work in Home Economics lessons. There is a problem with subject selection in Form 3 because they did not freely opt for Home Economics; it was assigned to the class (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

Similarly, Frank experienced problems with boys in his Home Economics class. Some boys absconded from the Home Economics lessons because they felt that the subject was for girls.

Just after a two-period Home Economics lesson in Form 1, the class monitor and some pupils told me that there are some pupils that are always absconding [from the] Home Economics classes. .. she said those pupils say Home Economics is for girls and not boys like them (Frank: Diary entry 18/02/06).

These findings suggest that the experience of teaching Home Economics was different for male and female teachers. This indicates that gender was an important factor in the teachers' experiences. However, from the teachers' experiences with gender issues, a further question may need to be raised as to whether the subject (Home Economics) indeed embraces an ecological perspective, which Eckman (1994) argues is important for a holistic focus on human environmental interactions, ideal for meeting the needs of families in developing countries. This question is important for informing teacher preparation, because the question of whether and how male Home Economics teachers (as well as male students) can confidently meet the demands of teaching (and learning) in Home Economics is partly dependent of the nature of the curriculum.

These findings indicate that, Home Economics is still perceived as a female-dominated subject. The finding that the teaching of Home Economics was experienced differently by beginning teachers of different sexes is consistent with the argument put forward by Zeichner & Gore (1990: 334), almost two decades ago, contending that:

Teachers are not just individuals possessing various knowledge, skills and dispositions, but they are also gendered subjects who are members of particular generations, races, social-class groups and who teach particular subjects at specific levels in the system of schooling.

These findings in this study therefore suggests that gender can not be considered as a silent dimension in a subject like Home economics. Rather it indicates the need for beginning teachers in Home economics to be sensitised

of the gender issues associated with the subject and the need to consider gender issues as important for discussion in Home economics teacher preparation programmes. This could help in the establishment of the relevance of the subject to both teachers and students of either sex (that are taking the subject) in order to reduce some of the tensions and stereotypes that were being experienced in this study.

5.6.2 Background factors

Another biographical factor that echoed in the teachers' experiences was background knowledge in the subject. There was evidence that teachers felt limited when teaching because of their background knowledge in Home Economics. Only Cathy in this study had done Home Economics during her secondary school education. The others only studied it at University. The teachers felt that they were not very familiar with the secondary school syllabus. Andy who was teaching Agriculture (which he had not studied at University), felt that the Agriculture syllabus was familiar based on his secondary school experience, unlike the Home Economics syllabus.

After four years of college, I come to teach and I still feel like things are new! But what I learnt in college does act as a guide. But I still find myself saying: so this is what is taught in secondary school. For example, with Agriculture, I already know that there is this topic and that. But for Home Economics, it's when I see the syllabus that I say: so what I learnt in college is also here. I thought college stuff is for college only (Andy: Reflection interview).

Dan described the secondary school syllabus as challenging and new. He attributed this to his lack of subject background.

Challenging because the things that I teach are new to me. I have therefore resorted to reading a lot. I also have problems with resources. There is just a little information in this book and a little in that. And it's a lot of work to identify relevant references. I think this is due to no good background (Dan: Reflection interview).

It would seem that familiarity with content knowledge as students helps in understanding of its teaching in later years. This would be supported by the literature on the role of “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975). However, and ironically, Cathy, who had done Home Economics in both secondary school and college, also expressed similar feelings of inadequacy with the content in Home Economics. This issue has been linked to subject-specific characteristics, which are discussed in section 5.7 of this chapter.

However, in general, the underlying issue that emerged from the beginning teachers’ experiences in this category is that teachers’ professional behaviour and its development cannot be isolated from their personal experience and their past background. Several past studies have shared this perspective and argue that being a teacher is a job that strongly involves the teacher as a person (Klechtermans, 1993). Also in the research on teachers’ thinking several authors acknowledge the importance of biographical experiences in forming the teachers’ personal opinions and implicit theories of education (Clark & Peterson 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The results in this study clearly show that biographical factors (such as gender) mattered to the teachers as well as to the students whom they taught. Their reflections about “age experiences” for example, also support the view that “self-image” is more important to teachers as practitioners, which may not necessarily be the case in other professions (Klechtermans, 1993). Since biographical factors influence the way teachers perceive their careers as teachers, they should also constitute an important category for consideration in teacher preparation and professional socialisation programmes.

5.7 Subject-specific challenges and problems

The findings in this study show that the biggest teaching problem that the six teachers experienced was knowledge gaps in Home Economics. These gaps have been grouped into three categories: gaps in practical knowledge, gaps in knowledge of some of the main subject concepts, and finally, gaps in teaching

knowledge for the senior syllabus (Forms 3 and 4). Other subject-specific problems that were also identified include: problems with planning and presentation of lessons, lack of teaching and learning resources, and experiences of subject stereotypes.

5.7.1 Knowledge gaps

The classic and widely cited gap between theory and practice (Flores, 2001; Hauge, 2000) was a recurring theme in these teachers' reflections during interviews and reflection meetings as well as in their diary entries. In general, the teachers felt that the theory that they learnt in college was not adequate to meet the teaching demands of Home Economics in school.

The way we are trained is different from the way we teach in class. We need more practical lessons, we need more practical skill acquisition in textiles and nutrition. We need more study of the syllabus at both levels (Southern region teachers' focus group).

The teachers felt they required a more practical teacher training course in order to meet the practical realities of classroom teaching and the demands in Home Economics. Furthermore, a more practical teacher training course was perceived as desirable because they thought it would enable them master the secondary school syllabus, which was also among their concerns in teaching. Because of this, they often perceived their college training as being inadequate.

I find my college training inadequate. My training was theoretical but school life is a practical experience. When I came here, I found that I did not know some of the names of some kitchen equipment. My SCE (methods course) was not practical enough. We should have been dealing with classroom lessons right from year 2; use more practically oriented lessons, for example, kitchen hygiene; how would you teach it? And then discuss it. Similarly, analysis of the Home Economics syllabus should have been done in earlier years so that in year 4 we

are familiar with both the JC and MSCE syllabus (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

In college, learning was less practically oriented, yet the subject requires more of this - think of nutrition (Cathy: Reflection interview).

The second gap they experienced was failure to address the integrated nature of the subject. None of the six teachers expressed competence in all the main concepts taught in Home Economics. Home Economics is an integrated subject. The integrated nature of the subject is perceived to be important in providing a holistic perspective on family issues, which is the focus of the subject. However, the findings in this study show that it is the integrated nature of the subject that made it difficult for the new teachers to feel completely confident in the subject area that they were trained to teach. They also cited their college preparation as a cause of this knowledge gap.

I feel Home Economics is interesting. Every time I realise it can be easily understood, because it is about day to day life - population, textiles, nutrition... my only worry is when I am not very sure of the topic, like in textiles. I fear *kudzangokazinga ana* [misleading students] because we didn't cover much in college (Reflection interview: Dan).

When I was teaching kitchen hygiene, I had a bad experience because of lack of adequate content knowledge from college [that was] relevant to what was called for in the syllabus (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

Among this cohort of Home Economics teachers there was a distinct difference in the perception of their competence in the two main areas of Home Economics, namely Food and Nutrition, and Clothing and Textiles. Although both areas require practical skills (in which they felt they did not have much experience), they all expressed more confidence when teaching the areas of food and nutrition, but felt very inadequate when teaching topics

in clothing and textiles. Andy contrasted his knowledge level in the two areas and explained that it affected selection of content when teaching.

As I have been teaching in the past month, I just discovered that there are some topics that I am very comfortable with. Given a chance, I would first teach these ones and then go to the others. And these are Food and Nutrition, Technology Preservation, and the like, Family, that is family life circle, a bit of Housing, Human growth and Development, that includes adolescence. Yah! Given a chance I would teach these and then go to the others. I feel that these do not give me problems, because I already have the information. Unlike the others like Textiles, and Design and the like. I would just put them aside. Not that I will not teach them, but in case I do not finish the syllabus, then it should be those that I am not sure about than those that I am comfortable with (Andy: Reflection interview).

From Andy's experience the teacher's level of content knowledge affects the subject content that is selected for teaching. Andy resorted to focusing on those areas that he was comfortable with in the syllabus. During this study I observed only one lesson on textiles and design. The majority of the lessons that I saw were on food and nutrition. This is by no means a representative reflection of the concepts taught during the five months of the study period. However, it does say a lot about the types of concepts that the teachers were confident with to allow someone (myself) to observe them teaching. The assumption that I make is that given a choice, as was the case in this study, teachers always choose to be observed when they are comfortable with what they are teaching.

The third type of knowledge gap was in teaching knowledge for the senior Home Economics syllabus - Forms 3 and 4 (MSCE level). The teachers in this study shared a concern that teaching Home Economics was more demanding than any of their other teaching subjects, but teaching the senior level was perceived as being even more demanding.

The teaching of Home Economics was perceived as more demanding because most concepts in the subject required prior planning and practice by the teacher. The teachers had to familiarise themselves with a concept, master a skill, set up an experiment or prepare the lab for a cookery session before lessons could begin. More time was needed for such preparations.

... the topics I was supposed to start with were textiles ones and I almost knew nothing concerning garment construction. This meant I was going to be taking days to prepare for a lesson, a thing that I think no teacher at SOS could allow to happen (Dan: Reflection interview).

Again the lack of adequate knowledge for teaching the senior level syllabus was attributed to poor college preparation:

Methodology dealt more on the junior classes, so it did not meet the needs of the seniors. In junior classes, there isn't much of cooking and there is a lot of cooking in the senior classes. Even in the textile part, the juniors' classes just learn the basic things like knowing how to use a sewing machine, its parts, and stitches. While in Form 3 they have to do garment construction. I think on the cookery part, I can read and learn more on the content (Cathy: Face-to-face interview).

Additionally, the schools' contextual factors were cited as further complicating teaching for these teachers. For instance, Cathy felt her students did not have adequate background in Home Economics because of the teacher shortage during their junior classes in Home Economics. As a result, she perceived challenges in teaching the senior-level practical lessons not only because of her knowledge gaps, but also because the students lacked the necessary background knowledge. Because of this, the teachers felt less comfortable when teaching senior Home Economics classes than when teaching the junior level. What was even more surprising was that Cathy (who was the only teacher with a secondary school background knowledge in Home Economics) said she felt more comfortable when teaching Agriculture, a subject that she

had no college training in, than Home Economics which was her major teaching subject in college. She linked this to the students' background and the practical nature of the senior Home Economics syllabus in the following reflection interview:

You have taught more of Agriculture and Geography, how do you compare these subjects to your H/E? Where are you comfortable teaching the most?

I can say first Agriculture, then Geography and finally Home Economics.

How come, considering H/E was your major and you never did Agriculture in college?

I say that because of the topics that I am teaching now. When I was on TP, I was teaching Form 1s and the topics, I was comfortable with them. But now the topics in Form 3 require practicals, and also it needs much for the students to understand. Maybe why this is added to this or why this happens.

But the curriculum is a spiral curriculum and you have all that in the junior level?

The depth is different. Yes, but also they did not cover much in the junior [classes]. When I look at the syllabus I know that these topics are best started at the junior level, so we have to start from the junior level stuff to make them understand and follow through (Cathy: Reflection interview).

This interview highlights and summarises two important issues that demonstrate issues that affected how the beginning teachers experienced the teaching of the subject. First is the nature of the subject, which made it more demanding compared to other subjects. Secondly, Cathy linked her teaching problems in Home Economics to the school contextual factors discussed earlier. In this case the teacher shortage led to inadequate preparation of students for the senior syllabus, which in turn became a source of Cathy's teaching challenge.

The literature in teacher education identifies a deep knowledge of the subject matter (or academic content knowledge) as the *sine qua non* for defining teacher quality (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990; Feinman-Nemser & Parker, 1990; Grossman *et al.*, 1989; Stotsky, 2006). Yet this study found that these beginning teachers had knowledge gaps in Home Economics. Consistent with this argument of the value of content knowledge in teaching, the teachers in this study experienced problems when teaching the subject. The specific problem related to knowledge gaps was lesson planning and presentation.

5.7.2 Problems with lesson planning and presentation

As a consequence of knowledge gaps, identifying the required content for specific concepts and planning the teaching concepts was not always an easy task for these teachers. This was obvious during lesson observations, when sometimes lessons ended before their scheduled time. Additionally, I noted that reflections on under-planning were also common in some of the teachers' diaries. Andy reflected more on experiences showing under-planning as one of his main teaching problems.

I have just discovered it seems I under-planned in Home Economics for the form 4s. This made me very unwilling to go and teach the work that is supposed to be taught next week, yet there are four periods remaining this week. This implies that I can cover work for the next two weeks within this week. I resorted to just giving them work to do [homework]. The work was from the 2005 Home Economics past paper (Andy: Diary reflection 01/02/06).

Similar to Cathy's experience, for Andy under-planning was more evident in Home Economics than in Agriculture, yet Home Economics was his main teaching subject during his pre-service teacher training in college. Andy felt that this was a problem because of lack of support and guidance in Home Economics:

I have no mentor in Home Economics, but I have a mentor in Agriculture. Agriculture mentor is also our Head of Department. He

gives me constant support and encouragement. We even practiced together on an experiment that I was unsure of in order to ensure that I could teach it properly in class (Andy: Reflection interview).

Again in Andy's case, the cause of his problem was linked to school contextual factors, as discussed in section 5.4.

The teaching practices of the beginning teachers were also characterised as with an examination-oriented approach. It was observed during the study that past national examination papers were frequently cited as sources for planning of classroom instruction and for checking relevant content to teach, in addition to assessment of student progress.

I was teaching Forms 1, 3 and 4. You know Geography was my minor in college and Agriculture I never did in college. The thing that helped me plan are the past papers. Usually I looked at the past papers, just to see how the exam is formed, so that I also follow similar format, bearing in mind that I was teaching Form 4, an examination class. So it means that if they are going to fail, they are going to look at me and say you didn't teach us well (Cathy: Reflection interview).

I didn't get any assistance, so both subjects I did independently. Sometimes I asked for past papers.... I got them for both Home Economics and Agriculture. We get them from the Head of Department or the Bursar and sometimes from the Stores Office. (Andy: Reflection interview).

In terms of preparing the tests, it was easy because I used past papers and the one who was teaching Form 3 last year gave me her questions and so I was just modifying the questions and some of them I was just copying because they were similar to what I had taught them. So it was not much of a challenge, and also I had some questions..... I had a group work and had prepared many questions which we did not get to finish, so I included them. So it was not that tough. I just had to use these questions, since they were available and also they are the type that come during MSCE examinations (Berth: Reflection interview).

Multiple factors can be attributed to the examination-oriented teaching approach that was practiced. Firstly, there were the pressures that the teachers experienced in teaching examination classes and being expected to improve student performance. Secondly, they felt a lack of guidance (lack of experienced teacher/mentor) in the subject syllabus. Thirdly, teaching a non-specialised subject necessitated that the teachers familiarise themselves with the scope of subject coverage. Past national examination papers were the most readily available reference source in the schools. The danger of such teaching is that it may not necessarily focus on the subject objectives, as learning will only focus on passing examinations and omit certain values or skills that come along with the learning of that subject. Home Economics, especially, is linked with learning of attitudes and values for everyday life. Not all these may be embedded in an examination paper.

Both the knowledge gaps and the exam-oriented approach to teaching are linked to the problems of teacher shortages and lack of support in the first year – contextual factors, which I contend is the core factor that affected the teaching experiences of the six beginning teachers in this study.

5.7.3 Other subject-specific problems

Apart from problems resulting from knowledge gaps, teaching was also affected by limited school funding and subject stereotypes.

All teachers in this study complained that limited school funding was a problem in Home Economics more than in other subjects. In a reflection interview after a classroom observation, Berth pointed out that the limited funding affected her teaching of concepts that required some practical activities. She was teaching a lesson on food technology and she noted that she could not follow the logical sequence for teaching the topic, since she had to skip some practical experiments due to lack of resources:

I was introducing this concept. I had to skip the section on flour mixtures because there was no money. I postponed it to next term. I told students to bring K50 each when they come next term, so we are going to purchase ingredients for food technology experiments and continue with food technology. So, just imagine, I just taught them the definition of Food Technology, types of Food Technology and its examples, and that's all. (Berth: Reflection interview)

The subject was also perceived to be expensive because of the need for practical lessons. Due to the limited funding in the schools, sometimes the teachers and students had to make personal cash contributions in order to have practical lessons.

During practicals we have to ask students to make contributions because of low funding in the school (Eddy: Face-to-face interview).

I have had to spend a lot of time reading on my own in order to teach my classes, buy my own resources. Even experienced teachers have problems in some of these, just like me (Cathy: Face-to-face interview).

A related problem was lack of reference materials. Lack of reference materials was experienced in all areas of Home Economics, although the problem was more acute when teaching concepts in clothing and textiles, and when teaching senior Home Economics classes. The absence of a single main Home Economics reference book for the senior secondary school level was often referred to as a big deficiency in teaching the senior level Home Economics course.

.....for your information, HE at senior level is very challenging, especially when you think of references. It's not that you go to a particular book and you find all the information from that book, like in other subjects. For HE you have to search in different books, and if you are lazy... the end result is disastrous (Andy: Face-to-face interview)

After getting the load from Mr X, I started looking for relevant books,

which to my surprise I discovered that there was only one book. This is making life tough. To make ends meet I sometimes have to borrow books from Kasungu secondary school (Eddy: Diary entry, 10/2/06).

In the week I also noticed that the problem of literature is very acute. For instance, there is a topic which I have to teach in Form 4 concerning food security policy and programmes at national level. This topic requires the food security policy document, which has all the objectives and goals. However, Chayamba secondary school doesn't have any. These problems are sending me long distances to look for relevant information (Eddy: Diary entry, 24/2/06).

The six beginners had difficulties in teaching some concepts simply because the reference materials were not available in their schools or at the nearby schools. This problem also has a link to the fact that most of these teachers lacked the support of experienced teachers, who usually have established ways of accessing materials.

I went to Masongola for some information on good grooming (especially on the case of different clothes). I felt discouraged when I could not find the information even from some veterans in the field ... teaching service. She had no information on that and she advised me to skip that part and start some topic as I continue to search for information (Andy: Reflection interview).

Also the availability of information in books. The books that are available. Because like in Food and Nutrition there are just so many books that are talking about food and nutrition and technology. So even if as a teacher you have little knowledge, you can easily go to those books and find the information. But Textiles and Design, even if you find the books, the information is not enough, and the books are also scarce (Frank: Reflection interview).

The problem that these teachers experienced was that teaching the senior Home Economics syllabus required the teacher to read broadly in order to

meet the demands of the syllabus in the subject, yet such reference materials were not always available. Furthermore, the teachers also noted that the available reference materials did not provide the context-specific experiences (Malawian examples) as required in the syllabus. This was a big problem, especially for the teachers who had no experienced teachers in their schools who could provide additional sources or information from their experience.

Problem of books, ...of course, I am trying to find out from other people on what they use. I have some modules from Domasi, but I still find them lacking, because I see that what is in them is not exactly tallying with what is in the syllabus. I was looking at food poisoning – prevention of food poisoning, reinforcement of Food Poisoning Act. But where is the Act? The syllabus sounds Malawian like. But to find books with the Malawish.... They are very, very scarce. So there are also other things like personal and kitchen hygiene, but you only find general books with very few points. The books that have been written by Malawian H/E teachers are also not detailed – discuss, analyse... just as in the syllabus, and their sources are also the same syllabus. We need references that provide the detailed analysis. So it's not easy (Andy: Face-to-face interview).

I have just started with the Form 3s ...three weeks now ...the only problem is with materials. Like with the Form 4s, there are no materials for practicals, if you are looking for a recipe, and these books are written in the United Kingdom or other countries like Zimbabwe and now the names of the items are in their local languages. Its difficult to identify that this is *mnkhwani* or *bonongwe*. *Umadziwa zina, koma zina osadziwa kuti ndichani* [You can make out for some but not all of them]. Others are in French *chomcho* [something like that]. Another problem is Form 4; there is a topic on food security. We are asked to discuss the National Food Security Policy. We have no pamphlet here where there is such a policy. I need to go to Kasungu ADD and maybe get some information on my own. It means I have to hunt for information for the Form 3s. For Form 1s ... no, I have no problems because the Strides [reference book] are really adequate. Sometimes I have to contact the KA Secondary School Home Economics teacher in order to get information or borrow reference material (Eddy: Reflection interview).

In addition to textiles and design, other areas that the teachers felt they had problems in teaching (knowledge gap) and yet could not easily access teaching resources and reference materials were new topics that had just

been introduced into the syllabus in the senior syllabus. These included concepts of consumerism and entrepreneurship skills.

But there are also some topics which are not in the junior [syllabus], like consumerism, entrepreneurship. And also we have problems finding reference materials, because there are no books written on them. It's very much unlike the junior syllabus; we have the Strides [reference book] in Form 1 and in Form 2. There are no specific books for MSCE. So even my colleague who has been here for some time also has problems with these topics because they are new. I don't think she has ever taught them herself (Cathy: Reflection interview)

...lack of adequate content knowledge for Form 3 and 4. Forms 3 and 4 have no specific books for H/E. It is difficult to find information for topics in interior design, consumerism and garment construction (Berth: Interview).

For a long time research in teaching has observed that subject matter knowledge does not seem to take centre stage in research on beginning teachers (Feinman-Nemser & Parker, 1990). These results in this study serve to fill this gap in addressing the experiences of the teaching of Home Economics. The findings in this study support the argument that teachers need well-grounded knowledge of their subject areas if they are to teach well (Ball & McDiarmid, 1990; Feinman-Nemser & Parker, 1990; Grossman *et al.*, 1989; Stotsky, 2006). Without such a well-developed knowledge base, and as observed in this study, teachers experience gaps in teaching which affects their selection of content knowledge to teach; they have limited choice of classroom practices and experience limitations in interpreting and extrapolating syllabus documents in the subject.

The beginning teachers in this study blamed their teacher preparation programme for their experiences of knowledge gaps. In an analysis of 86 studies of problems of beginning teachers, Veenman (1986) also noted that many of the authors in the sampled schools blamed teacher education for the

problems of beginning teachers. Veenman (1986) concluded by arguing that “It is unjust to think that teacher education could anticipate all the future problematic situations.” Feinman-Nemser & Parker (1990:33) concur with this view and contend that “whatever preparation beginning teachers have, there are some aspects of teaching that can only be learnt *in situ*”. Feinman-Nemser & Parker (1990) observed that beginning teachers learn on the job how to engage their students in worthwhile learning, beginning teachers lack a repertoire of strategies for representing their content, and they have to learn how to think and present topics in the curriculum. All these require practical experience on the job. For the participants in this study, it was also clear that the lack of support, limited professional development activities, absence of induction and all the other contextual constraints had a major influence on their experiences.

Furthermore, Craig *et al.*, (1998:xi), contend that, while teacher education can make a difference in teaching, certain factors need to be put in place if teacher training knowledge is to be useful. The factors that they pointed out have a very close relevance to the situation in this study:

Teacher education programmes can make a difference to student achievement depending on the type of education programme and support that is put in place. Specific factors such as the years of teacher training, teachers’ verbal fluency, subject matter knowledge, having books and materials and knowing how to use them, teacher expectation of pupil performance, time spent on classroom preparation and frequent monitoring of student progress are all key factors identified in key research studies that have a positive bearing on the quality of teachers’ performance and consequently, student achievement.

However, the finding that content knowledge gaps caused teaching problems in this study still needs consideration, because it is consistent with past research, which has shown that there is a positive correlation between teachers’ knowledge of their subject and their impact in the classroom (Wilson, Floden & Ferri-Mundy, 2001). According to Wilson *et al.* (2001),

teachers' lack of understanding of the principles of their subject impedes good teaching. This suggests that the issue of subject matter competence needs to be carefully considered for beginning teachers in Home Economics. This is especially important in Home Economics because of its integrated nature. In university education the content knowledge for specific subject areas is taught in content faculties, where the trend is towards specialisation, thus favouring depth of coverage rather than a broad subject perspective. Yet teachers require both a breadth and depth of subject knowledge. It would seem that the challenge for effective preparation of Home Economics teachers in Malawi depends on the ability to strike a balance between this depth and breadth in the subject, which would require close collaboration between the Faculty of Education and the related content faculties.

5.8 Instructional factors

In the data analysis in section 5.3 the category of *Instructional factors* was composed of two factors: class and student management, and school administrative support mechanisms. This section presents and discusses these two factors.

5.8.1 Class/student management and control

Class and student management and control were a challenge in the teachers' experiences in this study. The main class and student management challenges experienced by the beginning teachers were dealing with large class sizes and managing student discipline.

The teachers described their classes as large. The Home Economics classes ranged from 10 to 64 students (the average class size was 51, and with the exception of only two classes, all the classes had more than 30 students –

see Table 4.3). Those who were teaching additional non-specialised subjects (Agriculture and Geography) had even larger classes. Cathy had the largest class in this study, with 105 students in Geography. Cathy described her experience with this class as her most challenging experience.

Most challenging class was Form 3 Geography class because they were too many. There were 105. They were relaxed after passing their JCE and they had a year before Form 4. To do something to involve them all was very difficult; if you could joke, they would laugh for a long time, and they could make comments as if there was no teacher present. I used to punish them because of this. I used to make the students who were making noise to stand up for the rest of the period in class, or I could punish them after the class. Sometimes I could call upon them after classes and have them to explain...In Home Economics class, I had 39 students, I don't have problems with them but mostly because they are still in Form 1 (Cathy: Interview).

The teaching of large classes was associated with experiences of problems in controlling the whole class, classroom noise and time management. Although it would seem that the class sizes were smaller in Home Economics, the teachers observed that Home Economics teaching was different from most subjects. Home Economics required more space for practical work, and all students needed to be involved actively in all the classroom practical activities in order to ensure that skills were mastered. Furthermore, the teachers also observed that most of the Home Economics laboratories were taking in more students than they were designed for.

English has a lot of students too, but Home Economics needs a lot of hands-on experience. When you are teaching English you can debate or role play; not all participate, but it's enough. Unlike Home Economics – because during examinations, every one will do their own practicals so they need hands-on experience (Berth: Reflection interview).

Our Home Economics laboratory is very small. It was meant for few students but we have more than 30 students now (Eddy: Face-to-face interview).

In general all the six beginning teachers focused on using participatory student-centred methods in their teaching in all lessons observed and discussed. However, because of the large class sizes, the teachers often found it difficult to ensure effective learning and active participation by all students. Berth described her experience as demoralising because, although she tried to involve her large class actively, only a limited number of them participated in her lessons. She also found it hard to know all her students by name so that she could personalise her interaction with them during lessons.

It affects me very much because mostly the Home Economics classes are in the afternoon and the students sleep. When you wake them up they go back to sleep after 5 minutes and you see most of them dozing off. It is hard for me to manage the class when the students are sleeping. It is demoralising. The same students keep participating and I don't know all of them by their names. I only know the names of the students who are active in class (Berth: Reflection interview).

Similarly, Frank reflected on an experience with using group work in a large class, which turned out to be chaotic: too many in a group and a noisy class.

I used discussion as the main teaching method which resulted in very big groups. First they had to do a role play and go into groups to discuss the roles of each family member. Only a few people were able to discuss. The rest had to stand outside the circle. They were also very noisy. Not that they were off task, but I think they were too many and too far from the note taker, so they had to speak up. The noise was also going to other classes, and I really felt that I failed as a teacher. (Frank: Reflection interview).

Frank documented this as his low point for the week:

I had a low pint this week whereby I felt embarrassed that I failed to control pupils as a teacher. This is so because pupils had to make a lot of noise in their groups. Up to the extent of being heard by fellow teachers from other classes.... I used discussion method but then the groups were just big. (Frank: Diary reflection).

Similarly, at the end of another lesson, Berth's reflection revealed that, although she felt that she had accomplished the goals of the lesson, class management and resources constraints were a major concern in her teaching because of the large size of her class.

All in all, the lesson went on well, although there were some problems. The students were many; hence management of the class was poor. Also the cooker and hot plate were not working; hence we used the dovers [firewood cooker] which was hectic.

Apart from the large class sizes, the poor and limited teaching resources (as discussed earlier) also made teaching a difficult task. Such experiences frustrated the beginning teachers, who were trying to make their lessons participatory and interesting for their students.

Student indiscipline was another common instructional problem that the teachers encountered. Cases of student indiscipline included noise making, lack of punctuality and lack of seriousness about school work. The way student indiscipline was dealt with by the teachers demonstrated a shift in their management and class control practices. During the early face-to-face interviews, establishment of classroom rules and regulations, as learnt during college training, was often cited as the classroom strategy for instilling student discipline and creating a conducive learning environment. None of these early strategies included punishment during class time as a strategy.

For Home Economics these are the same students that I was teaching on TP. I just adopted what I learnt in college that sometimes it's good that when you are meeting the students for the first time to have some rules and regulations on what should be done if somebody does this. That's what I did with the Form 3s. I said if you are coming to class late you are disturbing the class, the teacher and even to you also because you have lost something, so to catch up... same thing what should be done to noise makers. Others said late comers should not be allowed in, but others said they should quietly walk in, but then it is still a disturbance..... So we agreed that punishment should be done after classes (Frank: Face-to-face interview).

Follow-up reflection meetings and classroom observations revealed a different practice of class management by all the six teachers. All the teachers used punishment during class/lesson times and practiced a more strict (stern) approach in dealing with student indiscipline. Exclusion from class was the most common method used for student disciplining.

It (exclusion from class) is useful because, once you don't let them in, you are sure that the next time they will come to class early, unlike when you tell them that you are going to punish them. They know that the punishment is at 3:30 pm. I tried to punish them after class, but noted that they do not seem to mind it so long as they are able to attend the lessons (Berth: Reflection interview).

Yesterday, it was hot and I took students outside for the class. Because of the class design, it gets so hot, so we usually go to learn there... I had told the class to each bring a needle... some of the students didn't, but I had asked them if they didn't have needles at home to tell me. So I sent them all away for a punishment. I was very angry with them. I think they were not taking my class seriously when I said they would need needles (Dan Reflection interview).

In general, the teachers developed a perception that immediate punishment was more effective for dealing with student misbehaviour and for maintaining class order.

Sometimes punishment doesn't work, but standing or kneeling in front worked because it was instantaneous. If you do it after class, it does not make sense because the noise continues in class, since he is still sitting next to his friend. They find kneeling or standing in front of their friends embarrassing (Andy: Interview).

Now I give the students punishment when they are found doing something wrong. For example, in class I make them stand up in front. On top of that when I am on duty during prep, If I catch them moving about, most of them say that I want to go the toilet or draw some drinking water, but it takes them 30 minutes of their prep time. When I see such students, I call them

and give them punishment the same night while their friends are studying (Cathy: Reflection interview).

This was a common practice in the study and clearly shows a trend suggesting that the teachers came with 'context-free' knowledge but got challenged by 'context-specific' issues and challenges in the school. These results also show that the beginning teachers in this study changed from a more democratic approach to an authoritative approach in order to exercise their authority and manage to control student behaviour, especially during class time. This is even more clearly shown in one of Dan's diary entry in which he wrote:

Sometimes when you try to understand the students, they take advantage of your being able to understand them. Exercising authority from the very first day of the lesson seems to be very important (Dan: Diary entry 10/02/06)

The beginning teachers' experiences of class management in this study are consistent with findings of several earlier studies on beginning teachers. For example, the now classic article "Perceived problems of beginning teachers" (Veenman, 1984) shows that in the majority of the studies reviewed:

- Classroom discipline was a real problem for beginning teachers;
- Beginning teachers changed their democratic teaching styles as a consequence of experiencing difficulties;
- Beginning teachers were very sensitive to student behaviours that could disrupt their planned presentations.

Similarly, studies by Flores & Day (2006) and Kuzmic (1994) also show that beginning teachers changed from a more democratic approach to an authoritative approach in order to exercise their authority and control over their students and classroom. It would seem that the complex and demanding

reality of the classroom situation calls for “on-the-spot” management strategies (Flores & Day, 2006) or “quick fix” mechanisms (Kuzmic, 1994) in order to ensure positive classroom interaction and better management of teaching and learning.

It is important to note that this study found that the beginning teachers first reflected on their college learning before they made decisions on class control and management. For example, in the case of Andy (cited earlier), he recalled learning about the importance of establishing classroom norms before justifying why he changed his approach. Another example is Dan, who had a lot of disciplinary cases to deal with, because most of his students were orphans staying in an orphanage. Dan felt that his college theory was very relevant now that he was teaching:

From the situation, I have realised that some courses at college, though seemingly useless and a waste of time, are useful and helpful in real-life situations: courses like personal and interpersonal communication, adolescent psychology, and instructional media and technology are taken lightly and are deemed not worthwhile... but very useful now (Dan: Diary reflection, 23/01/06).

This trend was observed in contrast to their experiences of subject-specific gaps. It was noted that when it came to generic issues of teaching (issues of pedagogy), the teachers were able first to reflect on knowledge from college before deciding on what they now felt fitted in the real classroom environment. The contrast that is noted here is that, while for subject-specific problems the teachers often felt challenged and perceived these as problems, for classroom control issues, they established alternative actions and justified their selected course of action.

The teachers’ reflection on teacher training knowledge is an indication of the value of initial teacher education in informing practice in beginning teaching.

However, as observed in this study, the decisions made by the beginning teachers were not always in line with what teacher education considers as good teaching (for instance, an authoritative teaching approach that was adopted). I contend that such conflicts arose in this study because the school environment failed to provide the necessary support mechanisms and feedback to enable the new teachers develop appropriate teaching practices while on the job.

5.8.2 *School administrative support mechanisms*

School administrative support mechanisms were the second factor in the category of *instructional factors*. The school administrative support mechanisms were perceived as a challenge mostly in relation to the nature of the subject. Unlike most of the other school subjects, Home Economics was felt to require constant financial and resource provision. The beginning teachers perceived that the administration did not always appreciate this need for financial support and it was hard to acquire such financial resources. As such, most of the time lessons had to be adjusted or changed not only because the schools had no funds, but because the administration did not see the need for such constant practical lessons.

...low point mainly not with students, but teachers and the administration. Because when you try to arrange for make up classes and you are trying to help them (students), they say why are you doing that? Do you want to make students to know that you can teach more than we do? So things like that. And when you ask for practicals, they always say there is no money, but the pupils pay K500 for this. So its also lack of support for the subject from administration (Berth: Reflection interview).

I asked for money from administration to go to Kasungu ADD to find some literature on food security. I was told to wait and up to this date, Friday, nothing has happened. This has really been a worrisome treatment this week (Eddy: Diary entry 2/3/06).

Administration was also blamed for being unable to sort out student subject allocations and issues of class size. During class observations and interviews, it was noted that Berth and Eddy had what can be termed as “fluctuating class sizes”. This was due to problems of subject options and subject stereotypes, which the school administration did nothing to resolve.

The teachers in this study experienced that home economics was perceived as an easier subject in the school curriculum by both fellow teachers and students. In addition to this, since Home Economics was an elective subject in the school curriculum, most of the good students did not opt for it.

.... Home Economics is an elective. Students have to choose amongst other subjects like Home Economics, Computer and French, so most of the good students go for Computer (Eddy: Interview).

In Forms 1, 2 and 4 only one class takes Home Economics (so its alright). Form 3 is different, because it is divided into two classes for boys and one class for girls. Options are Home Economics and Bible Knowledge; French and Social Studies; History and Computer. The other problem is that the French teacher wants to have few students and she sends them to the Home Economics teacher and he tells them Home Economics is simple. because there are some students who were not taking Home Economics in Form 2 but they came to my class. The reason they gave me was that they could not take French, but some students came late and the other teachers also said Home Economics is simpler. To them, Home Economics is cooking only. They don't think that there are other difficult concepts that require prerequisites (Berth: Reflection interview).

The two extracts from Eddy and Berth reveal some of the challenges and problems that the teachers experienced as a result of the perception of Home Economics as an easier subject. Firstly, it meant that the beginning Home Economics teachers were most likely teaching students labelled as ‘not so intelligent’. Secondly, class sizes were usually difficult to control. The Home Economics teachers had to accommodate new students who were rejected in

other subjects. Furthermore, some of the beginning teachers also noted that they were teaching students that were not necessarily interested in the subject. Such subject stereotypes caused class problems such as absenteeism, which disturbed teaching.

The teachers observed that, while they perceived these as issues that had to be sorted out by the school administration, the administration provided no solutions and teachers had to use their own discretion on who they allowed into their classes.

I told the Head of Department, and he told me that there is nothing he can do. When I noted that these things will not change, the only thing that I have done is not to let any additional students in the class. When they are asked why they are not in class, they say we are in a Home Economics class. When the Headmaster ask me why my students are not in class, I tell him they are not my students, they take French. The French teacher will say they take Home Economics and it goes on like that, we haven't solved anything yet.

Andy, Berth, Eddy and Frank also complained of administration's failure to be sensitive to effects of constant class disruptions on their work. The beginning teachers saw unplanned class disruptions as complicating their teaching plans, because they sometimes resulted in hastily planned make-up lessons which did not always prove to be successful.

This is a management problem. The Headmaster just decided that today we are going to have a meeting at 2 pm. We have no regular times for staff meetings. Sometimes he will just say "The grass is growing tall", that means there will be no afternoon classes that day, the students will do manual work. Home Economics classes suffer because mostly classes are in the afternoon (Berth: Reflection interview).

I failed to control the pupils in class.... The problem came about because I combined the two classes so the pupils were too many.... one Form 1 has

been missing lessons because twice we had a staff meeting during their period. (Frank: Reflection interview).

School administrative strategies have a major role to play in assisting beginning teachers settle into the school system and take up their teaching challenges with more commitment. Beginning teachers perceived the lack of a well-organised administrative system in the form of rules, regulations and structured school meetings as a source of some of their teaching problems. Past research indicates that beginning teachers are more vulnerable to working conditions, and this has often been associated to low working morale, lack of commitment to teaching and a high attrition rate (Weiss, 1999). Beginning teachers are more vulnerable, because they lack the social organisational environment that can help them to cope, since they are new in the school system (Weiss, 1999).

Past research also identifies the role of school administrators, such as heads of schools and heads of departments as crucial for ensuring that beginning teachers are settled in their schools, that they make teaching their permanent career, and for determining their first-year experiences (Weiss, 1999). The individualistic teaching approach and the lack of a clearly defined school environment (as noted in section 5.4 of this chapter) seems to have contributed a lot towards the feelings of a lack of administrative support that the beginning Home Economics teachers experienced in this study.

The lack of administrative support experienced by the teachers in this study also has a bearing to generic characteristics of Home Economics as a school subject and how it is perceived. The subject-specific challenges raised in this study characterise Home Economics as a school subject that had profound influence on the teachers' experiences: firstly, the practical and integrated nature of the subject, as discussed earlier, and secondly the teachers' experiences of subject stereotypes. Pendergast (2001:4) noted that Home

Economics teachers experience negative stereotypes worldwide. She observed that “Home Economics is a classic example of a marginalized field of study when taken from a modernist framework where things exist in dualities: one end of the dualism is privileged and the other marginalized”. Pendergast (2001) contends that Home Economics teachers and their profession are on the margins of the already marginalised teaching profession. Home Economics also often exists as a marginalised field of study classified as “women’s knowledge” and is devalued in the school curriculum. Because of this, Home Economics teachers often experience feelings of disempowerment and isolation and are constantly asked to justify the existence of their field. Based on such distinct subject experiences, I contend that the experience of teaching Home Economics is different from teaching of most of the other subjects in the school curriculum, which have a higher subject status. I therefore contend that, apart from the isolation that beginning teachers in other subjects may experience, beginning Home Economics teachers are in a more difficult situation as they also have to learn how to live beyond the stereotypes about the subject in the school system.

5.9 Coping strategies

The initial experience of teaching by the teachers in this study was coupled with challenges and problems as described in the preceding section. As a consequence of these experiences, the beginning teachers’ initial perception was that the teaching job was not motivating. It was described as a flat career with no prospects for professional development, and the pay was inadequate in relation to the work demands. Because of such frustrations, their current position as teachers was perceived as just a “stepping stone”, meaning that they would quit teaching as soon as they found another opening.

I am not satisfied with my job. There is no motivation. When you start something there is no motivation from other teachers. They say, its [Berth’s] project, lets see how it works out (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

What I can see is.... I said I don't want to teach for a long time. So I was told that it's easy, I can just apply to go to another department, like social welfare. ...as a teacher, I don't see any opportunities for professional development in the near future (Cathy: Face-to-face interview).

I am satisfied with teaching in KA, I like it but I am not happy with the salaries. I am getting K16,000 and it's too little ...I don't see any opportunities, otherwise I am planning to go back to Chancellor College to pursue a degree in Law (Eddy: Face-to-face interview).

Dan also wrote the following in his diary after a colleague left the school:

It was a Monday of mixed feelings. A good friend of mine who was also a staff member secured a scholarship to go to Germany. I was with him the previous Sunday but he never broke the news to me.... In most of our discussions we talked of securing other jobs... (Dan: Diary entry 31/01/06).

The classroom experiences of the teachers in this study can be summarised as a struggle to deal with the challenges and problems of initial teaching. The teaching experiences of the six teachers in this study show that survival and success in the school context was related to coping. It is also clear from this study that coping with the demands of teaching and its inherent challenges and problems involved a continuous process of analysing one's own beliefs and practices (Flores & Day, 2006).

In this study, I have identified four practices used by the beginning teachers as a means of coping with the challenges and problems that they experienced namely: reliance on personal knowledge; reflection on past school experience; establishment of good relationships with students as the means of coping with their daily challenges and problems; and finally, going through change as a coping strategy. At various stages of this study, change was noted. Change

in this study was a significant practice, because it showed how the new teachers tried to cope with their new environment and their interpretation of the professional demands.

5.9.1 Heavy reliance on personal knowledge

The teachers reported in this study lacked reference materials and had limited or no support. Earlier it was also pointed out that sometimes even experienced teachers were not always able to provide answers to their questions. Teaching therefore was a matter of teaching what you know about a topic, what you are familiar with, and leaving out the unfamiliar.

Because having used the books that I found I can't find answers, I just use my knowledge. But then I have to analyse the issues, the cause.... so as a beginning teacher I have to go back to my knowledge (Dan: Face-to-face interview).

As Dan points out, the problem was that personal knowledge was not always able to provide a complete analysis of the concepts to the required level. However, in the absence of any other reference materials or experienced teachers, there was no other option but to use their own knowledge in spite of the limitations that this may have had.

5.9.2 Reference to past school experiences

Past experiences as students in secondary school seemed to play a mediating role when faced with gaps, challenges or problems in teaching. Former school teachers were also used as an important socialising factor (Flores & Day, 2006; Knowles, 1992; Lortie, 1975). The teachers recalled their former teachers' practices in order to make sense of an experience, to justify or to reject it. Past school experiences were identified at various times as significant for informing the beginning teachers' classroom practices. The

beginning teachers acknowledged that sometimes, when faced with a problem, a challenge or even when dealing with student problems, they recalled what their teachers did during their school days.

I recalled one of my old teacher's strategy where by the noisemakers were made to come and stand in front, and they wrote while standing. I tried it and it worked (Frank: Face-to-face interview).

Sometimes I think of my secondary school teachers. Those teachers have had an impact on how I teach..... I have adopted the style of the teachers who were teaching me (Andy: Face-to-face interview).

...I was trying to compare myself to my former teacher in secondary school who had 36 periods, and was able to teach us (Dan: Face-to-face interview).

This finding is consistent with the many studies that have argued that the socialisation of teachers begins early in their past school and classroom experiences as students (Calderhead, 1993; Harley *et al.* 2000; Knowles, Lortie, 1975; 1992; Wideen *et al.*, 1998; Zeichner & Gore, 1990). However, in this study the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) was mostly associated with coping with issues of classroom pedagogy.

5.9.3 Establishing positive relationships with students

In spite of the challenges and problems, these teachers reported positive experiences as far as their interactions with students were concerned. They reported enjoying teaching because of the positive relationships that they had created with their students and the positive feedback that they received from them. The beginning teachers also felt that they were making a difference in students' learning. They often described their teaching practices as different from that of the other teachers with longer teaching experience. They perceived that students also enjoyed their teaching more.

The characteristics that were cited as making their teaching better included use of participatory teaching methods, being more sympathetic to students' needs, being available to provide support to both boys and girls, competence with content knowledge and frequent class exercises to give and obtain feedback on learning progress.

When I just joined teaching I noticed that only boys were coming to ask questions. I later established that girls were afraid of approaching female teachers, because they said they were not friendly to them and never assisted them when approached. I have had to work on this so that the girls are now free to come and see me when they have questions (Berth: Interview).

I have noted a change in the Form 4s. Most of the students that I thought were lazy, they now come to me to ask questions. I think they are changing their attitude towards learning. I have been counselling them on how they can approach their education and about their future. This seems to be working and the students have also developed a lot of confidence in me as their teacher (Cathy: Reflection interview)

In the first place, I taught the students to take me not as they take other teachers. For example, in the classroom, students could just sit and listen to the teachers. I came up with a different idea, I told them I am not the custodian of knowledge, they know some things more than me. This encouraged them to participate. I also encourage them to feel free to ask questions when they don't understand what I am teaching (Frank: Reflection interview).

The teachers also felt that they were making a positive contribution in improving students' class performance. Ironically, despite the gaps in subject matter knowledge that they complained of in other interviews, they attributed their abilities to improve students learning to their competence in content knowledge in the subject (Home Economics).

I do realise that H/E needs critical thinking and not taking it as just women's work. I am able to explain the theory well and in full, which

makes the students understand the concepts better. Frequent exercises with the class improves the performance of both teacher and students. Most of the teachers are not doing this, but it has helped a lot in my teaching. Also, before taking over the night school, I probed on the strengths of the last teacher. I was then able to capitalise on my own strengths and it helped me to gain the students' confidence - the previous teacher mothered the students, but was never free to open the students for questions if they misunderstood. I feel I have achieved this (Dan: Reflection interview).

First is my strong knowledge of the subject matter. I have no problems with Form 1 syllabus, because I was well grounded in college. My students have grasped a lot more from me (Eddy: Face-to-face interview).

I had to deal with the problem of passive students in class. Most experienced teachers seem not to involve students actively and that's the learning style that they are used to. I had to change this. I started calling out names randomly, even when I didn't know who was in the class. If there was a John, then he would have to answer the question. I wanted them to participate and learn, and they have changed. (Berth: Face-to-face interview).

Positive experiences with students seemed to generate feelings of success and confidence in the teachers. This finding concurs with that of Flores & Day (2006), who also found that positive classroom interactions with students results in increase in self-confidence and more positive evaluations of beginning teachers' own performance. As was indeed noted in this study, successful experiences encountered with each challenging experiences in class with students built self-confidence in the beginning teachers. Berth in this study is the teacher that seemed to have had the most challenging experience in gaining class control. Her early reflections showed that she was underrated by her students because she was young and female. She, however, later gained class control and her students developed confidence in her teaching.

My highest point..... comparing to when I just started teaching, the students were not expecting much from me. They were just taking me as someone from college. They didn't take me as a teacher, but a student teacher on teaching practice. But after some time, that's when they realised that no, she is not a teacher on Teaching Practice but she is really here to teach. So at first the class was like.... they were not giving me the respect that I deserved. But later on when they realised that she is in for serious business, they started giving me the respect, and when they had questions, they were coming to me to ask. Unlike in the past, they were going to their former Form 2 teacher. And they started to ask me to give them a lot of practical lessons. When I told them we do not have money, they were saying, "Ok, we are going to contribute". I gained their confidence and now we have a positive relationship. When they have a question, they come to me and ask me and when they don't understand they can freely tell me. And even the way I teach..... at first may be.... even the way I delivered the content in the first two months is different from the way I do it now. I can go there confidently, tell them what I want them to learn, even if I am not very sure about the topic, but still I make it that they do not know I am not sure (Berth: Reflection interview).

Dan had a similar experience of being underrated during his early months of teaching. He also observed that establishment of a good relationship with students helped him to gain the students' confidence.

In my first class, pupils were underrating me because of my age. As time went, they developed confidence in me and they are free with me. I think this resulted from the type of interaction they had with me....we were now speaking the same language (Dan: Face-to-face interview).

The characteristics of teaching that these six teachers cited as having made their teaching better are typical skills learnt in teacher education courses. The socialising role of teacher education courses is an issue of great contestation in the literature. In summarising the arguments put forth by the body of literature that opposes the value of pre-service teacher education courses Zeichner & Gore (1990: 336) identified two of their main arguments as:

- The continued use of the skills by the prospective teachers outside of the laboratory is highly dependent upon whether the ecological conditions in the specific classrooms are conducive to the use of the skills;
- Students come into the classroom with very low expectations about what can be learnt from professional courses about teaching.

The results of this study are in contrast to this body of literature that contends that the skills and dispositions introduced to student teacher training in methods and foundations courses have little influence on their subsequent actions as teachers. Considering that these teachers taught in large classes with limited teaching resources and support, and yet still insisted on using student-centred approaches demonstrates the impact of their teacher training course. However, it is significant that these teachers were teaching in school contexts that had high expectations of them, and also with a loosely defined school culture. In this environment the beginning teachers perceived that they were expected to bring in change and make a difference in the school. This finding is consistent with Rosenholtz's (1991) observation that the attributions that teachers cast for their performance are a reflection of their interpretations of the communication that they make about themselves from the work place. Therefore, the results of this study support the argument that the academic and professional training of teachers can make a difference, but point to two important factors that affect their implementation of the learning: (1) what they (the new teachers) perceive is expected of them from staff and colleagues; and (2) the need for continued support for the beginning teachers in order to forestall any challenges and make a meaningful transition into the profession for more effective teaching experiences and effective student learning.

5.9.4 Change as a means of coping

The coping strategies that the teachers used in this study also demonstrates change or shifts in the way the teachers perceived their work and situations.

There was evidence of change in the experiences of the teachers during the study period. While early face-to-face interviews showed the teachers complaining about challenges in the classroom contexts, problems with mastery of content knowledge and classroom control, their reflections towards the end of the study reveal shifts in the way these issues were perceived. The changes have been characterised as:

- *Shifts in perception of content knowledge*

For example, the beginning teachers seemed to have discovered how to teach concepts that were at first perceived to be difficult;

I said that there were topics that I am not comfortable in because they are difficult, but having started teaching them, I started thinking they are not as difficult as I thought. This will actually help me, because when I started looking at the fibres and the like, and this time, I realise I can teach them (Andy: Reflection interview).

With the Form 2 class I was teaching textiles and design, controlling fullness. I learnt a lot myself from the lesson. I had to practise gathering first but when I came to class, I found things that I had overlooked accuracy of gathering lines. You know when you tack and if on the two lines they are not stitched in parallel, the gathers are not straight. When I saw it, I said what is happening. So I looked in Melita Neal again, *Needlework for school*, and I saw what was happening. This is also my high point because I really learnt something which I used for the lesson to ensure a good output. It was a learning point (Dan: Reflection interview).

- *Shift in perceptions of problems due to lack of mentor*

Towards the end of the study most of the teachers felt that some of the problems that they reported experiencing, such as lack of reference materials, were not unique to them as beginning teachers. Even experienced teachers had similar problems;

Of course I mentioned that sometimes I say that if there was a mentor then things would have been different, but also I feel that it's not really the case. Because I see the other teachers that have the experience, I consult them in the areas I have difficulty and the answers that they give me are not convincing. So I think these problems are general. But it's true as I said that it's good to have somebody who knows better. Although when I ask them "What is this?" and they say, "*Inenso sindikudziwa*" [I do not know]. What I think really is that we need textbooks for the senior levels, Forms 3 and 4. That would have been better (Andy: Reflection interview).

- *Shift in the perception of the demanding nature of school roles*

School roles which were originally perceived as increasing their workload were perceived as having helped them to develop professionally;

I have learnt that one can teach anything because of teaching experience. By being a form teacher I have to be a counsellor, so I talk to students, parents as well as other staff members. So I have to be ready in handling issues and solving staff, student and sometimes even parents' queries. I have a Form 1 class with difficult students, so I am always kept busy and thinking of how to resolve disputes within and outside the class (Frank: Reflection interview).

- *Shift in perception of teaching as a 'stepping stone career'*

Unlike at the beginning of the study, when it seemed that anyone could drop out of the study and go to another job, there was some evidence towards the end of the study that some of the teachers had begun to like the profession;

When I think of quitting teaching as a profession it's only because of money issues and nothing else. Otherwise I don't have any big problems, maybe on and off, especially when you are on duty, like today I am on duty. You just see people sitting outside. You talk to them, they are, like, they don't hear you. You think you should just use corporal punishment and then no, that won't work, but of course that cannot make me want to quit (Andy: Reflection interview).

The finding that the teachers were making changes in their practices and perceptions is a common characteristic in studies on beginning teaching (e.g. Berliner, 2001; Lacey, 1977; Maynard & Furlong, 1995; So & Watkins, 1995; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1985). However, in this study I have interpreted the changes that these teachers made as a way of coping with their experiences in their initial year on the job. As has been pointed out in earlier sections, these shifts indicate a change because of the mismatches between their expectation prior to starting teaching and the actual teaching experiences. The shifts that these teachers underwent as a means of coping also suggest some form of “self-protection” (Rushton, 2000).

However, it needs to be pointed out that not all the strategies for coping with change had positive teaching and learning effects. For instance, some of the change implied lowering standards in order to reduce the gap between the excellent teaching image that the beginning teachers came with and what they saw as being possible within their capabilities and the school context. A typical example was the perception of shortage of reference books as a problem common to all teachers regardless of teaching experience. This is a problem, because it implies that in future not much effort will be placed on sourcing the reference materials or information. This observation is a strong indication that the challenges and difficulties in the initial year somehow tarnished the optimism of these young teachers.

The shifts in the way the six beginning teachers perceived their situation could also be an indication of the developments that were taking place in them. These shifts demonstrate what Holly & McLoughlin (1989:260) described as the nature of professional development in teaching over two decades ago:

As teachers, we function from our own evolving personal, professional, theoretical bases. We act on continuously changing schemata – structures of thought that are modified by and through our actions, and reflections about those actions. As we act on our world, and are

reciprocally acted upon by it, our perceptions change. With the change comes a restructuring of our assumptions, explanations, and theories.

The difficulty with the situation in this study is that the lack of support and absence of professional development opportunities meant that there was no means of substantiating these experiences to support the teachers' development, and to make sense of the experiences to enhance a positive professional development process. Rosenholtz (1991) cautioned on the dangers of lack of support and absence of professional development opportunities amongst teachers by observing that such teachers do not learn from their daily experiences. In analysing the experiences of teachers in schools where teachers worked in isolation and with limited support, Rosenholtz (1991:82) summarised this contention by posing the question: "Does the teacher have ten years experience or one year's teaching experience repeated ten times?" The practice observed in this study risks the problem raised by this question.

The results in this study point to the fact that, for the six beginning teachers, opportunities for learning were circumscribed by their own abilities to discern problems, develop alternative solutions, chose among them and assess the outcome. The absence of support and feedback in the schools meant that there were limited opportunities for the new teachers to learn from pre-existing sources of practical knowledge. Without such knowledge, the teachers were less able to perceive and interpret daily events and transactions that could be very easily understood if they had access to an already developed technical culture (Rosenholtz, 1991).

5.10 Concluding comments

The most salient finding of this study lies in the impact that the school context

had on the professional socialisation and experiences of the six beginning teachers. This study therefore serves to confirm the findings of several earlier studies that have highlighted the significant role of the school context at the beginning of a teacher's career (see, for instance, Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Flores, 2001; Flores & Day, 2006). The descriptions of the teaching experiences of the six teachers were full of references to challenges and constraints stemming from the school environment. This bears a lot of similarity to most of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Furthermore, similar to the findings of Flores & Day (2006), the beginning teachers' experiences in this study point at mismatches between their (initial) expectation of their role as beginning teachers and the teaching roles that they took up as first-year teachers. However, the results of this study show a unique relationship between the school context and school expectations. In this dissertation, I contend that it is this relationship that was the key to understanding the professional experiences of these six beginning teachers.

Throughout this chapter I have presented the school contexts in this study as distinct in two ways. Firstly, it was limited and constrained in its provision of teaching and learning resources. Secondly, I have argued that the schools were unique in their high expectations of beginning teachers (in comparison to most studies reported in the literature). In this concluding comment I wish to emphasise a third school characteristic in this study. The schools (including the six beginning teachers themselves) underestimated the difficult nature of learning to teach. They held a simplistic view of learning to teach that assumes that teaching is a craft that can be mastered through university teacher education programmes. I argue that it is naive to consider learning to teach in such a linear process. Rather it must be considered as a much more complex and multifaceted process (Craig, *et al.*, 1998). The mechanistic view of teacher education as mastering one skill fails to prepare teachers for the complex and unique realities of the school and the unpredictable classroom events (Hoban, 2002). It also fails to portray teaching as a life-long process of learning (Feinman-Nemser, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1991).

In this chapter I have presented and discussed the six categories that emerged as the main themes during the inductive data-analysis process. In the next chapter I present the substantive-level theory that has been developed from this data.

Chapter 6: A substantive-level theory

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the substantive-level theory that was developed from the data in this study. Theory in the literature has been defined in several different ways. Because of these unsettled notions about what theory means, Charmaz (2006) observed that disagreements often arise about how to do grounded theory and what a complete grounded theory should entail. Charmaz (2006:125) therefore advises that “to assess if, how, and when grounded theory studies offer ‘*bona fide*’ theories, requires taking a step back and asking: What is theory?” I find defining the theory developed in this study as a crucial part of this dissertation thesis, not only for clarifying its meaning but also for establishing its relevance, practicability and applicability in the literature on the beginning teacher and more specifically in the pre-service training of Home Economics teachers in Malawi.

The substantive-level theory in this thesis is presented in a diagram format. This format allows for both the components of the theory and the interrelationships between the components to be presented. The remainder of the chapter consists of inferences that I have made about the substantive-level theory in relation to beginning teaching and teacher education. In the last part of this chapter a set of assertions is given relating the theory to teacher education in Malawi as a developing nation.

6.2 Theory defined

Kerlinger (1973:9) defined theory as “a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of

phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena". Glaser & Strauss accept this definition, but go beyond it in their contention that good theory does not only explain and predict, but it is also useful. In their view, the functions of theory are:

(1) to enable prediction and explanation of behavior; (2) to be useful in theoretical advance; (3) to be useful in practical applications--prediction and explanation should be able to give the practitioner understanding and some control of situations; (4) to provide a perspective on behaviour – a stance to be taken toward data; and (5) to guide and provide a style for research on particular areas of behavior (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:3).

According to Gasser & Strauss (1967) grounded theory is seldom presented as a tightly knit set of interrelated categories, definitions and propositions. Rather, the theory is discursively developed in narrative form as categories, and their relationships are defined, elaborated and illustrated by the data used to generate them. Thus the most useful and natural form for the presentation of a grounded theory is a running discussion that permits full elaboration of the situation or problem under study. The theory of beginning Home Economics teachers presented in this study is presented in this discussional form using the conceptual categories that were developed during the analysis.

The constant comparative method of analysis used for generation of this theory puts a strong emphasis on "*theory as a process*; that is theory as an ever developing entity, not as a perfect product." In explaining this, Glaser & Straus (1967:32) contend that:

...this discussional form of formulating theory gives a feeling of "ever-developing" to the theory, allows it to become quite rich, complex, and dense, and makes its fit and relevance easy to comprehend. In contrast, to state the theory in propositional form would make it "less complex, dense and rich and more laborious to read". It would also tend, by implication to "freeze" the theory instead of giving the feeling of a need for continued development.

Theory generated through the methodology of grounded theory can either be substantive or formal. In distinguishing between substantive and formal theory, Glaser & Strauss (1967:32) state:

By substantive theory, we mean that developed for a substantive, or empirical, area of sociological inquiry, such as patient care, race relations, professional education, delinquency, or research organisations. By formal theory, we mean that developed for a formal, or conceptual area of sociological inquiry, such as stigma, deviant behaviour, formal organisation, socialisation, status congruency, authority and power, reward systems or social mobility.

Thus, substantive and formal theories exist on distinguishable levels of generality, which differ only in terms of degree. Substantive theory deals with a particular limited domain of inquiry, such as preschool programmes, emergency-room care, or university extension services. Substantive theory is therefore close to the real-world situation. A formal theory, in contrast, deals with a general domain of social science, such as socialisation or formal organisation, and is conceptually abstract (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

As outlined in Chapter 5, in this dissertation, the professional experiences of beginning Home Economics teachers has been interpreted as a factor of six main categories (or themes) consisting of contextual factors, high expectations, biographical factors, subject-specific (Home Economics) factors, instructional factors and coping strategies. Figure 6.1 is a summary of the data analysis process and shows how these categories were developed, and how they are interrelated and interact to form a substantive theory of the beginning teachers' experiences.

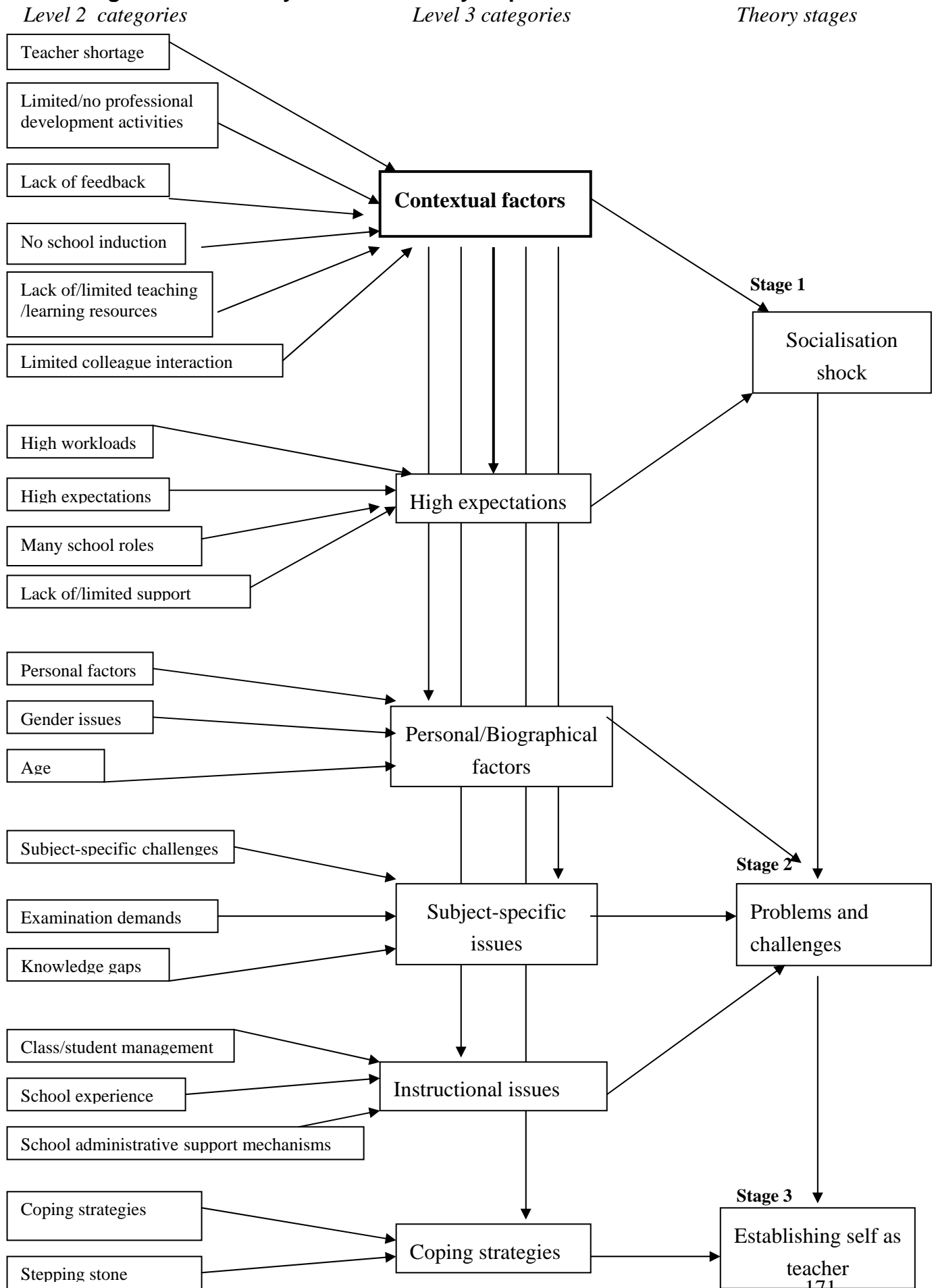
In Figure 6.1 contextual factors represent issues in the current school context in Malawi. The current school context is seen as the core category (and is presented in bold). The school context was also seen to be the category that

affected and influenced the beginning teachers' experiences in terms of what was expected of them professionally, personally, in terms of their subject matter and instructional experiences as well as the strategies that they used to cope. This is indicated by arrows from the category of "contextual factors" to the other five categories. The arrow between contextual factors and high expectations is presented in bold to highlight the significant nature of this relationship in the teachers' experiences.

"High expectations" is presented as the category immediately under contextual factors. It was noted that the poor and limited contextual factors (such as teacher shortage) made a lot of demands on the beginning teachers. Although they were just beginner teachers, the schools' expectations of them were always high. In some cases the expectations from the beginner teachers were even higher than what was expected from experienced teachers. Contextual factors directly influenced the expectations of the schools. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two identified "reality shock" or "practice shock" as one of the characteristics of the beginning year of teachers. I propose "socialisation shock" to represent a similar experience in the first stage of the six beginning teachers. However, my concept of socialisation shock extends to include the impact of mismatches and high expectations generated within the school context.

Biographical factors, subject-specific factors and instructional factors are categories that represent the nature and sources of the problems and challenges that dominated the beginning teachers' experiences in the study. This finding is similar to the findings of several other studies on beginning teaching, which describe the first year as a "sink or swim" experience. *Challenges and problems* is therefore a summary of the teachers' experiences in the second stage in the theory.

Figure 6.1 Summary of the data-analysis process



Coping strategies is the last of the six categories. Coping strategies represent a shift in the experiences of the teachers: from perceiving teaching as a frustrating stepping-stone career to one in which they felt they could make a difference. This last stage in the framework is summarised as “*establishing self as teacher*”. In spite of the problems and challenges in the environment, the last phase of the study noted that the teachers demonstrated an increase in feelings of confidence in their own work, and a desire to improve pupil performance. The teachers also often described their teaching as more participatory and that they were making a difference in the lives of the students. This finding suggests that in spite of the problems and challenges that the beginning teachers faced, the heavy reliance on them, and the school’s high expectations of them that resulted from the shortage of teachers in the schools, their high educational qualification (compared to the majority of teachers, who had only a Diploma in Education), enabled the beginners to develop a confidence in themselves and in their skills, which seems to be an important factor for improving beginning teachers’ morale on the job.

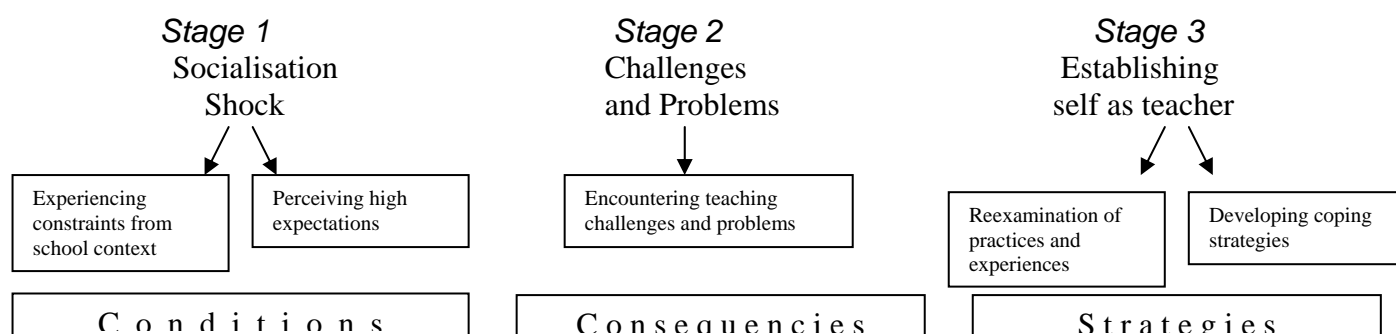
However, I argue that this finding does not supplant the conflicts, contradictions, limitations and experiences of knowledge gaps in their teaching experiences. The finding therefore implies a compromised picture of their initial expectations, rather than a process of development: simplification of their teaching roles as a means of self-defence and self-survival (Easthope 1997; Rushton, 2000). The use of coping strategies (such as changes in perception of teaching difficulties described in Chapter Five) are examples of the means through which this simplification occurred so that they could quickly establish themselves as teachers due to the demands of the school environment.

Nevertheless, I contend that the two findings are not necessarily contradictory; rather they serve to show the effects of the constrained school

environment, where the beginning teachers experienced limited opportunities for growth and professional development, yet were expected to perform. The school environment held this expectation for its own ‘sustenance’. I claim that this practice led to a ‘terminal view of teacher learning’ – one in which certification of graduate teachers makes them ready to meet *all* professional demands. The beginning teachers’ succumbed to their environmental pressures and expectations by perceiving that they were capable teachers, while compromising their original picture of good teaching.

The core process in this framework is therefore the interaction between the school context and the high expectations (this is the cause-effect relationship represented in Figure 5.8 in Chapter Five). As a result of this, the professional experience of the six teachers in this study is described as “struggling to live up to expectations”. Based on this framework, in this dissertation I propose a three-stage substantive-level theory comprised of socialisation shock, problems and challenges, and establishing self as teacher (see Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 Struggling to live up to expectations: a three-stage substantive-level theory of beginning Home Economics teachers in Malawi.



The three stages presented in this theory (Figure 6.2) represent the three levels that the teachers went through during their socialisation as developed in the framework (Figure 6.1). Stage 1 represents the conditions in which struggling to live up to an expectation occurred. Stage 2 represents the consequences of this condition. Stage 3 indicates that the beginning teachers read and interpreted the prevailing conditions and expectations, and developed strategies for survival and coping in order to establish themselves as teachers. The three-stage theory presented in this thesis places the emphasis on conditions (stages 1) as significant for the way beginners establish themselves as teachers (stage 3). Based on this theory, I make the assertion that the prevailing school conditions have the impact on what type of teacher the beginning teacher ultimately becomes.

This theory bears a lot of similarity to the findings of Bartlett (2004) in the UK in a study of teachers who were experiencing high workload but receiving little support. Bartlett (2004: 576) noted that, even in the absence of adequate support the teachers:

[were] unable to abandon the expanded role conception easily because it has become a standard of good teaching they have internalized. Abandoning the expanded role would require them to either accept a lower professional standard of themselves or redefine what it means to be a good teacher.

Bartlett (2004) contended that mainstream theories of overwork were ineffective in accounting for some of the teachers' tendencies, and suggested an alternative theoretical framework of overwork for teaching, stating:

This research suggests an alternative theoretical frame of overwork for teaching – based on the commitment of care workers to live up to moral obligations determined through individual and collective conceptions (Bartlett, 2004:576).

Bartlett's analysis alerts us to the fact that teachers' work is determined by the individual and collective expectations created in the work place, and that teachers will strive to live up to that expectation. Bartlett (2004) argued that a good fit between teachers' work expectations and the material support of the organisation enables teachers to complete their work without overworking, to minimise stress and to help sustain work commitment. The three-stage theory presented in this study shares a similar fundamental principle as that observed by Bartlett (2004): the desire to live up to the expectations held by themselves and their colleagues. The theory therefore raises the significant role of expectations in determining what teachers can or cannot do.

The impact of expectations was also echoed in the work of Rosenholtz (1991), who observed that people (teachers) assigned meanings to situations and the actions of others and reacted in terms of their interpretation of those meanings. Based on this argument, the expectations of colleagues and other school staff members act as a mirror to what beginning teachers perceive as organisational norms and what is expected of them. Therefore, based on the perceived expectations of colleagues and the school organisation, a school can support or constrain beginning teachers' ability to fulfil their conceptions of good teaching. Consequently, from the three-stage theory presented in this thesis, it seems logical to make a further assertion that professional socialisation and experiences of beginning teachers are inherently determined by the school-wide expectations.

6.3 Implications for teacher education and teacher development

The findings in this study serve to confirm the findings of several earlier studies that have highlighted the significant role of the school context at the beginning of a teacher's career. However, the results of this study show a unique relationship between the school context and school expectations. In this dissertation, I have therefore contended that it is this relationship that is

the key to understanding initial teacher development in Malawi. Consequently, I contend that a consideration of this relationship between school context and school expectations needs to take centre stage in the planning of future Home Economics teacher education and teacher development programmes in Malawi.

The three stage substantive-level theory identifies important conditions, consequences and strategies in the socialisation of beginning Home Economics teachers, which have implications for teacher education, as explained below.

6.3.1 The need for contextualisation of teacher education programmes

The results of this study have pointed to the significant role of the school context in the socialisation of beginning Home Economics teachers. Paradoxically, the school context in this study is also the major constraint in the teachers' experiences: The school context in all the six schools was highly deficient in its provision of both material and human resources to support the beginning teachers. The literature reviewed in Chapter Two suggests that the way teachers are trained should reflect the views and the nature of existing cultural and contextual factors (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Feiman-Nemser, 1990; Zeichner, 1983). The framework that has been developed in this study has characterised the six schools as resource constrained. It is also clear that in these conditions beginning teachers are remarkably challenged, as they have to immediately take up full teaching responsibility to provide sustenance to the school system. The finding that the beginning teachers experienced mismatches between their prior expectations of beginning teaching and the school reality indicates that the existing teacher education programme is not able to raise a full awareness of the extent of the challenges in the schools. Such school conditions are unlikely to be changed in the short term. Therefore, teacher education in Malawi needs to consider

the preparation of teachers who are able to meet the demands of such constrained school environment as its current prime challenge.

6.3.2 The need for a shared responsibility in teacher education

At the core of the six teachers' experiences were problems and challenges related to subject-specific gaps (Home Economics), in which the gap between theory and practice is highlighted. It seems clear from the teachers' experiences that mastery of subject matter knowledge is a critical factor in the teaching of the subject because of its integrated nature. It has also been shown that several past studies share a concern on the inadequacy of teacher education courses in meeting needs of beginning teachers. This study proposes a redefinition of the roles of the school and of university teacher training programmes in Malawi to ensure that both sectors take an active role in contributing towards teacher education. Under such a system teacher education should be perceived as a joint task, and that both the university and schools should take an active role in ensuring the quality of beginning teachers. Development of such a joint teacher learning process would require the provision and creation of school support mechanisms as described in the next section.

6.3.3 The need for provision of teacher support

The socialisation experience of beginning teachers in this study indicates an urgent need for the provision of professional support services to beginning teachers in order to afford them an environment that allows for meaningful reflection and learning. This study has raised lack of teacher support as a major concern in the experiences of the six beginning Home Economics teachers. Induction and mentoring programmes for new teachers have been reported in most of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two as a useful and a necessary way to develop effective teachers. They have also been applauded

for providing a smooth transition into the profession. It would seem that in Malawi there is need for the introduction of similar practices in order to reduce the difficult experiences of the first year of teaching.

6.3.4 Creation of realistic expectations from beginning teachers

The three-stage theory in this study alerts us to the impact of expectations in shaping the experiences of new teachers. The results have shown mismatches in prevailing expectations. This finding is indicative of differences in assumptions held by the school system and the teacher education programme. It would seem that, while in teacher education the approach is to provide theory that would be substantiated during the induction years, the school system held the view that beginning teachers enter the system ready for the demands of the job.

This finding suggests the need for the creation of a clear understanding of the notion of beginning teaching to ensure that beginning teachers are supported; and so reduce problems and challenges which continue to result in “practice shock”, and “swim or sink” experiences, as was observed in this study. Such a notion is important for the development of realistic expectations of what beginning teachers can do and how best pre-service teachers can be trained to meet the demands of the school context. It is also important for the enhancement and development of the perception of learning to teach as a life-long process of learning.

6.3.5 The need to emphasise teacher learning as a life-long process of learning

Overall it would seem that the need for continued professional development is at the core of the experiences of teachers in this study. In an era of changing

demands on teachers it is inappropriate to perceive teacher development as a single period of teacher education at the start of a career. Although teacher education is expected and required to prepare quality teachers in its various programmes, it is unrealistic to expect that it will anticipate all the unpredictable future needs of a changing society. The creation of a continuum of learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001) is perceived necessary to ensure that teaching is perceived as a life-long process of learning. In Malawi this is also an important and urgent mechanism that can help to provide support to beginning teachers and redress the current experience of “socialisation shock” because of the constrained school system.

Therefore, based on the substantive-level theory that has been developed in this dissertation, I argue that there is an urgent need to redefine the perception of teacher learning in Malawi: from a definition of pre-service teacher education as teacher learning, to teacher learning as a “triadic process” comprised of initial teacher education, school induction and professional development. Pre-service teacher education should therefore be perceived only as an initial process in teacher learning.

6.4 Concluding comments

This study has addressed the professional experiences of beginning Home Economics teachers in Malawi. In this dissertation I have argued that the professional experiences of the teachers were located in the interaction between the context of the school settings and the expectations that the schools held of the beginning teachers. The professional experience of the six teachers in this study is largely a result of this relationship, which created the perception of teacher education as a ‘terminal point’ in teacher learning.

The debate on practical and theoretical knowledge in teacher education has

been addressed in the literature (Chapter Two). The literature seems to suggest that the challenge for teacher education is to create programmes that develop the beginners' inclination and capacity to be able to "reflect on action" and "reflect in action" (Barnes, 1989; Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Shulman, 1987; Schon, 1987). However, in this dissertation I argue that some school contexts preclude beginning teachers from engaging in meaningful reflection on or in practice. This study has shown that the perception that beginning teachers come with a well-grounded knowledge base from teacher training courses failed to provide for such reflection and learning. The expectations from the school context (with its constrained nature) acted as a constraint for learning as the beginning teachers focused on blaming their teacher education programme for failing to prepare them fully (see Chapter Five), instead of reflecting on their experiences to make well-informed decisions.

Today teachers find themselves teaching in a complex, changing world (Hargreaves, 1994). By proposing a substantive-level theory in this thesis, I hope to stimulate additional thought on the issues that affect the professional development of beginning Home Economics teachers. "Substantive theories are restricted to a particular setting, group, time, population or problem" (Creswell, 1994:83). The three-stage substantive-level theory developed in this dissertation therefore applies to this particular group of beginning teachers. However, the reader may choose to generalise the substantive-level theory beyond these six beginning teachers. Erlandson *et al* (1993) places the burden of transferability on the reader of qualitative studies. In order to assist the reader in this process, I have supplied "thick descriptions" of the participants and samples of the data in Chapters Four and Five. The summary provided in the framework in Figure 6.1 continued to provide these thick descriptions by making clear the links and interrelationships developed from different data sources as I interpreted the categories that led to the development of the theory. In the next chapter I reflect on the processes of conducting this study and draw my final conclusions.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The design of any scientific enquiry establishes how data are to be developed and analysed. In this study I started with an awareness of the multiple perspectives and the complexity of teaching and teachers' professional development knowledge. I also began with a statement of the belief that developing a comprehensive theoretical framework might be desirable and that this can only be achieved through an exploration of the experiences of beginning teachers. I have consequently presented a conceptual framework and theory of the professional experiences of the six Home Economics beginning teachers in Chapter Six. In this concluding chapter, I present my reflection on the process of conducting this study and reflexively analyse my own experiences.

7.2 Reflection and reflexivity

In Chapter Two I defined reflection as a process of reviewing, reconstructing, re-enacting and critically analysing one's own performance, and grounding the explanation in evidence (Schon, 1987; Shulman, 1987). In this section I wish to reflect on the process of conducting this study by discussing, analysing and highlighting some of the key lessons drawn from the experience. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2000: 2) reflexivity is "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher, the 'human as instrument'". Reflexivity involves a process of consciously experiencing the "self as both inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as one coming to know the self with the process of research itself". I use both terms "reflection" and "reflexivity" in this section as a way of emphasising both the lessons that I draw from having conducted this study as well as to allow for self-disclosure and self-awareness.

7.2.1 Personal and professional reflection and reflexivity

I perceive the process of conducting this PhD dissertation study as providing personal feedback after a long journey. I began my journey as a beginning secondary school Home Economics teacher in 1991. In 1993 I joined the University of Malawi as a Home Economics teacher educator. The development of this thesis has been a process of feedback and reflection on my fifteen years as teacher and teacher educator. At various points of the study I have asked myself "Have I been doing a good job? How else could I have informed beginning teachers? How do I forge ahead?" As I try to answer these questions, I am even more certain than ever that the future of Home Economics teacher education in Malawi holds yet more challenges.

In conducting this study I have been reminded more and more of the complex nature of teaching. Although the teaching profession is assumed to be well known to almost everyone by virtue of their having passed through the education system (classrooms) (Barnes, 1989), teaching does not have a unifying conceptual framework; this is because of the dynamic nature of the profession and the multitude of continuously changing factors that teachers have to reflect upon in order to make decisions in their daily practice. In this dissertation I have presented a framework and theory for professional experiences in beginning teaching. This is not an attempt to bring an end to this problem, but rather to make a contribution towards the endless search for quality in teaching. It is my hope and belief that the framework and theory presented in this dissertation will be able to shed some light towards the advancement of initial Home Economics teacher training and teacher development.

7.2.2 Reflection and reflexivity on my roles as researcher

In Chapter Three I explained the different roles that I brought to this study and/or adopted at various points. One of these roles is that of a teacher

researcher. I explained my definition of teacher researcher by concurring with Lankshear & Knobel (2004), who disagree with the commonly accepted definition of teacher researchers as teachers researching their own classrooms with or without collaborative support; they argue that the crucial point is that the objectives of teacher research must flow from the authentic questions, issues and concerns of teachers themselves. Since this study arose from questions arising from my experiences as a teacher educator in Home Economics, and that the findings in this study inform my teaching practices as a teacher educator, I find it proper to define this study as a form of practitioner research.

At various other points in this dissertation I have also referred to myself as a social researcher. Piantanida, Tananis & Grubs (2002) argue that there is a difference between doing social science research and dissertation research in a “practitioner field” like education, as is my case. Since I am not trained as a sociologist, I cannot claim to have been looking for “sociological constructs” in my method of coding as Glaser (1978) suggests, nor for a “conditional matrix” as advised by Strauss & Corbin (1998). It would be presumptuous to make such claims. In this dissertation I do not make any claims to making any contribution to the discourses of sociology. However, interpretive research is increasingly becoming important in teacher research. The development of a framework of beginning teachers’ experiences in this study demonstrates the potential of grounded theory methodology to help in increasing knowledge and understanding within the field of teaching, which is still highly contentious and without a unifying theoretical framework. As more researchers use the approach, research reports that explicate the life worlds of teachers will make an essential contribution to knowledge development in the field. Therefore, as a practitioner-researcher I make claim only towards the development of a substantive-level theory that may help in increasing knowledge within my field of teaching and teacher education.

My experience in this study addresses Huberman's (1996) concern on the value of practitioner research regarding its effects on teaching practice and educational outcomes. Huberman (1996) questions practitioners' ability in this type of research to transcend their personal biases and avoid distortions and self-delusion. Firstly, I feel that in a dissertation research like this one the academically rigorous processes involved leave little chance for personal bias. Secondly, I refer to Chapter Three, where I have argued that this type of research offers an opportunity for the study of issues that are pertinent to practitioners. From my experience my role as a practitioner researcher (and my multiple roles) offered me the rare opportunity for engaging in a rich dialectic between professional practice and teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2005). Through such discourse between practice and scholarship I have been made to be more aware of, and more sensitive to, the commonly claimed gaps between theory and practice (which was also among the important issues of concern in the experiences of the teachers).

My emphasis on the role of practitioner research is consistent with current trends in Europe and the USA, where the roles of teacher educators are defined as "neither scholarship nor practice but 'a rich dialectic of the two'" (Cochran-Smith, 2005:221). This definition implies that the lines between professional practice in teacher education and research related to teacher education are now becoming increasingly blurred. According to the literature, such reconceptualisation of the role of teacher education holds great promise for teacher education programmes that mirror the contextual and culturally specific contexts of schools. Unfortunately, the literature also shows that in Africa not much effort is directed in this direction (Akyeampong, 2002). I trust that in this study I have demonstrated the significant role that practitioner research conducted by teacher educators can play in deepening the understanding of the local needs in schools in Malawi, and as an example of an African context. In the process of doing this, I have identified the following as important guiding principles to enhance the continued reconceptualisation of the role of teacher education:

- Teacher research needs to be perceived as an integral part of teacher education;
- Teacher educators need to be encouraged to identify and pursue questions derived from their practice;
- Teacher education research needs to be perceived as an ongoing process;
- Teacher education should be perceived as a dialectical process.

Consequently, adopting multiple roles in this study was important for two reasons: firstly, it helped me to identify the expertise that I needed to display in order to competently pursue and complete the study; and secondly, it helped to create meaning in the processes that I engaged in. However, my multiple roles were sometimes the source of a dilemma. For instance, working within the interpretive paradigm, my role as a researcher was to observe, describe and interpret social phenomena as they occurred. However, being a teacher educator and closely connected to student teacher supervision and guidance, I sometimes felt inclined to engage with the beginning teachers in ways that would provide them with the support that they often lacked. Such research engagement would have been in conflict with my selected research paradigm, since it leads to effecting change in the course of the research process. My dilemma was therefore negotiating in an appropriate way between my roles as a teacher educator and my role as an interpretive social researcher. I chose to stick to the process of observing, describing and interpreting, although in some instances I was able to feed my developing insights into discussions with the beginner teachers. However, I was always mindful and very conscious of not interfering too much with the natural flow of the issues under study.

In this study I chose to confine my research activities to the interpretive paradigm, because it sufficiently provided the answers to the questions that I set out to explore. However, I do acknowledge the potential contribution that my study could have made in the professional lives of the six beginning

teachers had I not felt compelled to limit my activities within the methodological limits and initial purposes of the study.

7.2.3 Methodological reflection and reflexivity

The use of grounded theory in this study has been one of my most enriching and satisfying experiences. The use of grounded theory methodology as described in this thesis gave me the rare opportunity of observing, reflecting upon and obtaining critical feedback about my job as a Home Economics teacher, a teacher educator and as a social researcher. This study has been an indelible experience in my life and will continue to play a significant role in my career.

Generating theory that is grounded in semi-structured interviews, field work observations, case study notes, or other forms of textual documentation (as was the case in this study) has become an important approach used by many social science researchers today (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003). However, although grounded theory's popularity persists after four decades since its establishment, it has not been without its critics. Over the years several scholars have challenged the legitimacy of grounded theory and the high place that its methods have come to hold in the social sciences. Thomas & James (2006) for example, dispute grounded theory's status as "theory" and the status that it can be "discovered". In addition to these criticisms, Thomas & James (2006: 768) highlight several other criticisms that have been raised about the methodology, which they summarised by stating:

... first, that grounded theory oversimplifies complex meanings and interrelationships in data; second, that it constrains analysis putting the cart (procedure) before the horse (interpretation); and third that it depends upon inappropriate models of induction and asserts from them equally inappropriate claims to explanation and prediction.

Thomas & James (2006: 771) contend that “the claim for grounded theory actually to be theory raises some questions about what it is to be *theory*, what is demanded and expected of theory, and why people expect their methods-for-making-sense to be called ‘theory’”. Furthermore, given the diversity of views that are encompassed in the term ‘theory’ (see Thomas, 1997 for a detailed discussion), in pursuing this study I found the question of what theory is in social science research most challenging and intriguing. Yet it was also the question that was fundamental to the aim of this dissertation. This is also perhaps because most prevalent definitions of theory derive from positivism.

I found Charmaz’s (2006) contrast of two forms of grounded theory most useful in arriving at my final definition of theory in this study: objectivist grounded theory, which is based in the positivist paradigm; and constructivist grounded theory based in the interpretive paradigm. According to Charmaz (2006: 126), “interpretive theories allow for indeterminacy rather than seek for causality and give priority to showing patterns and connections rather than to linear reasoning”. This study was based in the interpretive paradigm; therefore decisions about the research process were embedded within the epistemological principles of the interpretive paradigm. Consequently, the analysis process in this study placed emphasises on understanding the beginning teachers’ experiences within their social context rather than on explanation. Since the interpretive paradigm acknowledges the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is being explored, and the situational constraints shaping this process, I also adopted the notion of reflexivity, which involved making known my perspectives and the possible impacts that this might have on the process being studied. In this thesis I argue that such a process of developing interpretive grounded theory is useful in a practitioner field like teaching, because it creates the potential for the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the profession.

Another contentious but equally important issue in the literature is the notion of “discovery” in grounded theory. According to Thomas & James (2006:785)

“discovery” means “a process of uncovering, revealing, disclosing that which is there.” Based on this definition, Thomas & James (2006) argue that “the idea that theory can be ‘discovered’ therefore puts that theory a long way away from interpretation”. From my experience of using grounded theory, I agree with this observation. I therefore wish to concur with Henwood & Pidgeon (2003), who suggest that in grounded theory researchers generate theory as opposed to discovering it. Henwood & Pidgeon (2003:34) contend that “philosophically speaking, theory cannot simply emerge from or reflect data, because interpretation and analysis are always conducted within some pre-existing conceptual framework brought to the task by the researcher”. They therefore argue for a constructive revision of grounded theory, and use the term generation of theory, rather than discovery. This constructive revision more accurately captures both the systematic rigour in analysis and the creative and dynamic character of the interpretive research process. I accept this argument, and stemming from this, I contend that the terms ‘discovery’ semantically misrepresents both the epistemological and practical realities of the approach.

Furthermore, the constructivist revision of grounded theory alerts us to the fact that data should guide, but should not limit theorising, because to be able to generate a theory, researchers use their theoretical sensitivities, which are brought in by their experience or disciplinary knowledge of the phenomena under study. For instance, in this study it has been my experience as a Home Economics teacher and teacher educator in Malawi that provided me with valuable insights for understanding, describing, interpreting and analysing the teachers’ experiences as they unfolded throughout the study. This view is in line with Glaser & Strauss’s (1967) contention that it is logically impossible to approach inquiry as a true *tabula rasa*.

I wish to emphasise that use of grounded theory provided me with explicit and sequential guidelines for conducting the study at each phase and offered

specific strategies for handling the analysis phase of the study. Furthermore, the use of a triangulation of methods, as described in this study, was useful to provide different slices of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which in turn contributes to the reliability and trustworthiness of grounded theory studies. However, it also needs to be pointed out that the process of transcribing, coding and categorising the data (which took place throughout the five-month field-work period) is a very tiresome and overwhelming experience: firstly, because the process produces a large volume of textual data; secondly, because it is a very laborious and messy process. Although there are guidelines on how to synthesise and analyse data in the field, the actual process relies mostly on the researchers' deep engagement with the data and her/his sensitivity: the process requires a lot of epistemological labour on the part of the researcher. It is the experience from this process of "transforming field-work activities" to meaningful segments of data that compelled me to concur with researchers who contend that data are produced through human acts of will and intent. I therefore contend that, while strict adherence to the grounded theory procedure as a general rule ensures the trustworthiness, credibility, reliability and validity of the research outcome, the data that result from it requires a researcher's sensitivity and analytical skills if any sense is to be made out of it.

As a final note, I wish to acknowledge that no amount of reading could have prepared me best for the anxiety and overwhelming experience that I felt in the field when I was confronted with volumes of data – a web of categories, and feeling like being lost in a maze. However, I believe that this is the challenge and excitement of using grounded theory.

7.3 Possibilities for future research

The experiences of the six beginning teachers in this study have pointed out the school context in Malawi as unique and different compared to what is reported in

most of the literature, the majority of which comes from non-African contexts. The study has also pointed to the uniqueness of Home Economics as a school subject, which contributes to how teaching is experienced. There is, however, a need for more studies that further explore pertinent issues in beginning teaching in Malawi. One important research area could be a study like that of Calderhead & Shorrock (1997) which explore the professional development of teachers from pre-service teacher training to their induction year. A longitudinal study of beginning teachers from the first year to their third year on the job, like that of Avalos & Aylwin (2007), could also give a more detailed picture of issues, trends and practices in the first years of teachers and provide a very useful base for teacher development in Malawi. Another important study could entail comparing the experiences of beginning teachers across different subjects within the same cohort. The issue of practical versus theoretical knowledge also needs further exploration within a Malawian perspective. Such a study would be useful to inform teacher education in how best pre-service programmes can be structured in order to ensure that students are well equipped to meet the current challenges and limitations of the school setting.

7.4 Study limitations

The results presented in this study are based on data developed over a five-month period in the schools. This fitted well with the time allocated for completion of this dissertation. But, because of the nature of teaching, a year-long study of the teachers' experiences in the schools is desirable as it would take into account the dynamic nature of teaching and changes that occur over time.

7.5 Concluding comments

Finally, and to conclude this dissertation, I wish to contend that the first year of the six beginning teachers described in this study cannot be called "an induction year", because the word induction presumes "some form of being

guided through.” These teachers worked independently most of the time and discovered their way in the school system through their own efforts. In this thesis I have attempted to describe how the beginning teachers experienced this process. I hope that the insights that I offer will go some way towards assisting with issues of teacher support and professional development that take into account the conditions in Home Economics as a unique school subject, and the Malawi school context in general.

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Appendix 1: Clearance letters

November 2005

Dear Colleagues

CO-OPERATION IN RESEARCH PROJECT

This is to certify that I know ***Ms. Esthery Kunkwenzu*** and that she is registered as a PhD student / researcher at the above University.

Ms. Kunkwenzu is a full-time researcher doing work towards a doctoral degree in Education with a focus on the professional experiences and responses of first year Home Economics teachers. Her primary interest is to ascertain the views of teachers regarding challenges and opportunities related to teaching Home Economics in secondary schools in Malawi.

She intends developing questionnaires for this group of teachers and will arrange to conduct interviews, class visits and follow up discussions with teachers to discuss their experiences of teaching the subject. She will also be providing opportunities for collaborative discussions amongst teachers and will document their discussions of experiences of these processes.

I assure you that all ethical issues related to the research have been fully discussed and that she will ensure that this is communicated to her respondents. I would appreciate it if you could give her your full co-operation with her research as I am sure it will ultimately benefit teaching and learning in schools.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

Dr C.P.S Reddy [Study supervisor]

Senior lecturer

Dept Curriculum Studies

Tel (021) 808 2259

Fax (021) 808 2295

Email: cpsr@sun.ac.a

November 2005

The Secretary
Ministry of Education and Culture
Lilongwe, Malawi

Dear Sir

ACCESS TO SCHOOLS FOR RESEARCH PROJECT

This is to certify that I know ***Ms. Esthery Kunkwenzu*** and that she is registered as a PhD student / researcher at the above University. Her study was approved by the departmental committee for masters and doctoral studies as well as the Education Faculty board and the university senate.

All ethical issues related to the research have been fully discussed and resolved and the study was deemed to be beyond reproach in this regard. She will ensure that this is communicated to her respondents and that the research is conducted within accepted ethical norms.

Ms. Kunkwenzu is a full-time researcher doing work towards a doctoral degree in Education with a focus on the professional experiences and responses of first year Home Economics teachers. Her primary interest is to ascertain the views of teachers regarding challenges and opportunities related to teaching Home Economics in secondary schools in Malawi.

I would appreciate it if you could give her your full co-operation with her research as I am sure it will ultimately benefit teaching and learning in schools.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours faithfully

Prof E.M. Bitzer
Departmental Chair
Dept Curriculum Studies
Tel (021) 808 2300
Fax (021) 808 2295
Email: emb2@sun.ac.za

Telegrams: MINED LILONGWE
Telephone: (265)1 789 422
Fax: (265)1 788 064/184

Communications should be addressed to:
The Secretary for Education



In reply please quote No.: —
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
PRIVATE BAG 328
CAPITAL CITY
LILONGWE 3
MALAWI

HRD/9/6

Wednesday, January 11, 2006

ALL DIVISIONAL MANAGERS (6)

ALL DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGERS (33)

Cc: Acting Director Secondary Education

Director Education Planning Services

Director Education Methods Advisory Services

**Prof. E.M. Bitzer, Department Chair, Department of Curriculum
Studies, Private Bag X1, Matieland 7602, South Africa.**

**ACCESS TO SCHOOLS FOR RESEARCH PROJECT: Ms. Esthery
KUMKWEZU.**

The bearer **Ms. Esthery KUMKWEZU** is a full-time researcher doing work towards a doctoral degree in Education with a focus on the professional experiences and responses of first year Home Economics teachers. Her primary interest is in challenges and opportunities related to teaching Home Economics. She will interview graduate beginners from Chancellor College.

I shall be grateful if you accorded her your fullest co-operation with her research.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Thomasa'.

T.M.M Nthenda

For: SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION

Appendix 2: Informed consent form

Date

Dear _____,

I am writing to request for your participation in a study that I am conducting entitled '*Professional experiences of beginning secondary school Home economics teachers in Malawi*'. I am a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at Chancellor College, but currently pursuing PhD study at Stellenbosch in South Africa. I am seeking participation from secondary school Home economics teachers who graduated from Chancellor College in 2005.

You are assured that your participation and contributions will be kept confidential and your identity will be kept anonymous through use of pseudo names in all study documents as well as the final report.

If you have any questions now or during the course of the study, you can contact me at any time, by phone, fax or email as indicated below.

I shall be grateful if you can sign the section and return to me, the section below to indicate your informed consent in participating in the study.

Many thanks,

Esther Dembo Kunkwenzu

Phone: 08368143

Fax: 01524046

Email: ekunkwenzu@chanco.unima.mw

Informed consent form

I agree to participate in the study entitled 'Professional experiences of beginning secondary school Home economics teachers in Malawi', current being conducted by Mrs Esthery Dembo Kunkwenzu for her PhD research.

Name_____

Signature_____

Date_____

Appendix 3: Biographic details questionnaire

Professional experiences of beginning secondary school

Home economics teachers in Malawi

Biographic details

1. Teacher identity_____

2. District of origin_____

3. Date when teaching commenced_____

4. Name of school

5. How familiar were you with this place/school prior to your posting?

6. Type of school: Tick appropriate box

a	Co-education	
b	Single sex (boys only)	
c	Single sex (girls only)	

7. Details of teacher:

a	Male	
b	Female	
c	Age	
d	Marital status	

8. Subject specialisation in college

a	Main teaching subject	
b	Minor teaching subject	

4. Did you study Home economics in:

		Yes	No
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a	Primary school		
b	Secondary school		

9. Fill in the box below to provide a description of the classes that you are currently teaching

Class	Subject	No. of students	
		Male	Female

Appendix 4: Semi structured face-to-face interview guide

Professional experiences of beginning secondary school Home economics teachers in Malawi

Face-to Face interview guide

1. Socialisation into the school system
How have you settled into your school?
 - Interaction with colleagues in the work environment: Describe the kinds of relationship/interactions you have with colleagues
 - Work relationships with colleagues
 - Feedback received from colleagues
 - Autonomy on the job
 - Your satisfactions/dissatisfactions/challenges or problems
 - Kinds of opportunities given for professional development
 - Assignments to special committees/other roles held in the school apart from teaching
 - Explain/describe any form of support that have you received from the school as a beginning teacher (eg induction, mentor support, etc).
2. Classroom control and management
How easy or hard was it to gain control of your classes as a beginning teacher?
 - Most challenging experiences
 - Strategies used/adopted
 - Sources of your teaching style
 - Successful experiences
 - Problems still encountering
 - What kind of support have you received from colleagues or mentor
3. Subject specific experiences
Are there any challenges that you are experiencing specific to Home economics?
 - If yes, describe them
 - How do they affect your teaching

- If the problems are specific to you as a beginning teacher, explain how this is so?

4. *What have been your most memorable experiences of teaching in the start of your career?*

- Have there been any positive experiences?
- Have there been any negative experiences?
- In what ways do you see your college training as having adequately prepared you in your job as a home economics teacher?
- In what ways do you see your college training as lacking in its ability to prepare you for the realities of your job as a Home economics teacher?
 - Identify any gaps or weaknesses in your training

5. *As a beginning home economics teacher, what would you say are some of your strengths?*

- Possible sources of the perceived strengths

6. *As a beginning home economics teacher, what would you say are some of your weak points?*

- Possible causes of the weaknesses

Appendix 5: Classroom observation schedule

Professional experiences of beginning secondary school Home economics teachers in Malawi

Classroom observation schedule

Part A: Lesson Observation

Date and time	
Teacher identity	
School identity	
Size of class: no of boys, girls and total	
Other characteristics of the class/description of context	

Lesson description

Topic	
Main concepts of the lesson	

Objectives of the lesson	
--------------------------	--

Lesson development

Stage	Teacher activity	Students' activity
Introduction		
Body of lesson		
Concluding activities		

Other special features of lesson		
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Part B: Reflection

Reflect on each part/stage of the lesson: eg

<i>Any successful experiences from the lesson?</i>
<i>What do you like about the days lesson/ topic/concepts</i>
<i>What do you dislike about the days lesson/ topic/concepts?</i>
<i>Any challenges/problems you faced with the delivery of the lesson?</i>

Discussion points:

- *How much and what kind of planning went into the lesson?*
- *Any challenges/problems you faced with in the preparation of the lesson?*
- *What influenced you to teach the way you did? ie choice of methods of teaching, pupil activities etc*
- *What kind of assistance did you get if any?*
- *How similar or different was this lesson to other lessons you have had with this class?*

Appendix 6: Teacher diary/journal guidelines

Professional experiences of beginning secondary school Home economics teachers in Malawi

Notes for Teachers Journal

Each participant is requested to keep a journal as part of the research process. The main aim of the journal is to keep a chronological record of events and experiences for later reflection alone or with me, on a weekly basis.

Below are some key guidelines which should assist you on explaining what a journal is and how best to develop a journal on your professional experiences during this study:

What is a Journal?

- A journal is a personal documentation of impressions, descriptions, circumstances, thoughts, experiences or feelings as they occur.
- It is a dialogue of facts and interpretations as the author perceives them
- It can be used to reflect on, clarify and explore events and issues in your teaching.
- It can be useful for teachers to understand their own professional experiences.

When to make journal entries

- It is always best to make entries as soon as an activity occurs, eg soon after a class or a staff meeting.
- You are requested to ensure that you at least make entries every week to avoid forgetting key issues in your experiences.

What should you write in the journal?

- Date of entry
- The setting if it is important
- Personal feelings
- Experiences- both positive and negative
- Relationships with colleagues, students, administrators etc
- Impressions/ideas/perceptions about people/events/situations/your subject

- Successes and failures
- Challenges and problems
- Teaching resources/Home economics content
- etc

Reflection

Reflection is an important part of this journal. You can reflect on an experience before, as you write, or after entering an experience in your journal. Your reflection should answer questions such as:

- What happened in class today?
- Why did it happen?
- What did I do?
- How could I have done it better?

Sample journal format

a. Daily reflection points

	Description of incident/feeling/observation	Reflection Why? How? What next?
Week 1		
Date and time		

b. Weekly reflection points

Week 1: Dates
▪ <i>High point this week</i>
▪ <i>Low point this week</i>
▪ <i>Events that may have influenced you this week</i>
▪ <i>Challenges experienced this week</i>
▪ <i>Constraining factors if any</i>
▪ <i>What changes that occurred in your daily schedule this week</i>
▪ <i>General issues or questions which emerged</i>
▪ <i>Anything else which you consider important to mention</i>

Appendix 7: Sample from teacher o

A. DAILY REFLECTION POINTS.

WEEK	DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT/ FEELING/OBSERVATION.	REFLECTION
1		Why.
Friday 03/02/06	<p>- We had a staff meeting whereby I was encouraged by the Headmistress' comments concerning my performance as the Chairman of Sanitation Committee</p> <p>- She Openly pointed out that 'only Mr Kachyamba is active in the Crew and she told the other members to follow suit.</p>	<p>- As a beginning teacher, I was very worried by these comments, and at the same time I was happy.</p> <p>- I was a faded picture that the members of the staff will have about me, especially because of my age difference and lack of experience.</p> <p>→ Personally, I think the reason for the inactiveness of the staff at that time I did not know for our first meeting yet, so that I could not formulate a plan to be achieved. I think the term 'inactive' was</p>

Roles
played by
H/M
→ High exp.

High
exp.